

THE SMART SET

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CLEVERNESS

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"THE SMART SET" FOR MAY

The May number will open with a striking novelette, the scenes of which are laid in London. The principal figures are some Russian anarchists, and the story is as timely as it is powerful. This tale, which reveals its author in a wholly new vein, will surprise his host of admirers.

"THE VISIONISTS," By Gelett Burgess

The short stories will be distinguished for their great variety and literary merit, and will be contributed by such writers as James Huneker, Grace MacGowan Cooke, Mark Lee Luther, Anne O'Hagan, Zona Gale, Owen Oliver, Virginia Woodward Cloud, Ethel Sigsbee Small, and others.

The essay, which has always been such a notable feature of "THE SMART SET," will be called "On Love-Letters," by Frank S. Arnett. The poetry will be seasonable and maintain the magazine's high standard. Duncan Campbell Scott, Hayden Carruth, Maurice Francis Egan, Mildred I. McNeal, and Florence Wilkinson will be represented by their best work.

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THE RED-HEADED WOMAN

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

VENI

“**I**S the colonel married?” I asked.

Lightfoot shifted the tobacco from one cheek to the other. “I reckon he’s the most married man in Piñon County,” he announced gravely.

We had driven three miles farther, the ponies going at an easy lope, the buckboard rolling smoothly over the springy turf, my eyes feasting on the dim blue line of the Magdalenas, the swimming uplands at their feet, and the great sweep of brown-green plain between, when Lightfoot rumbled out:

“There’s more hell in that sorrel filly o’ his’n than would set up a whole paster full. Yas, she’s hell—an’ repeat.”

I was unaware of any reason for my being informed as to the peculiarities of some filly belonging to the colonel, but I nodded gravely; I was desperately afraid of appearing a tenderfoot. It was not till weeks afterward that I knew old Lightfoot alluded in these terms to the colonel’s wife.

The next mile brought us in sight of the ranch house, and I caught my breath. Who would expect to find a place like that ten miles from a railway in New Mexico? To be sure, it was nothing more than adobe; but its white walls rose tall and stately; the great, pillared porch had for posts peeled cottonwood logs painted snowy white; its broad flight of shallow steps was white also, and upon them lay a couple of gay Navajo blankets. Cushions, and wicker porch furniture put about the entrance, gave an appear-

ance that might have been expected in Tuxedo or Lenox rather than in the Western cattle country. To complete the illusion, my partner’s wife came down the steps to welcome me, gowned in the latest absurdity of afternoon-tea regalia. Behind her stepped a quiet-footed, perfectly trained Japanese.

“Let the boy take your things,” she said graciously, extending a welcoming hand in the highest of high-hand shakes. “I’ll give you fifteen minutes to scrub up, and then you can be down here for tea—tea on the terrace. I perched my house on this slope—instead of flat on the floor of our cañon, as all the ranching people build them—so I could fence in a strip and call it a terrace.”

I turned and looked about upon it all. “You have a beautiful home,” I said.

“El Nido, the nest, I call it,” she explained, her own glance following mine in a circuit of the fine site, and with evident satisfaction; “and I’m one of the birds that demand a cozy nest.”

I smiled and bowed, and with some light rejoinder followed the boy, who somehow seemed familiar to me. Yet, I reflected, all Orientals look alike; and what so improbable as that the man I fancied he resembled—who had been in the class above me at Harvard—should turn up with a jacket on, waiting in somebody’s dining-room?

Lightfoot brought up my trunk, which had traveled over with us on the back of the buckboard. The boy uncorded it, and I instinctively chose a suit of white linen which I had had

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little expectation of wearing at the ranch.

The woman's eyes scanned my get-up with satisfaction when I reached the terrace. "We're waiting for you," she called gaily; and I saw a big, gray-mustached man seated across from her at a tea-table.

I had met the colonel in New York two years before. He rose now and came to welcome me with that Western heartiness which is so gratifying to the stranger. "You met the missus before you went upstairs?" he inquired.

I bowed. "I've been getting married since you saw me," the colonel went on, a little grimly. "I wasn't a married man when I was in New York. The ranch, and things around here, look considerably different from what they did then. I can promise you 'all the comforts of home,' now."

There was something curious in the way the colonel said this; yet as we ate crisp muffins, and drank from tall glasses something my hostess called iced tea, I didn't think it an exaggeration.

"No doubt you behaved better than most of the married men do when they go East," said the colonel's wife philosophically, buttering a muffin for herself.

"Does that mean that he behaved better two years ago than he would now?" I inquired. "That would speak ill for your influence."

"Oh, my influence!" she laughed, shrugging her shoulders with a gesture which I grew to recognize as characteristic. "The colonel was a tolerably old bird when I caught him, and pretty well settled in his ways."

I had leisure now to examine my hostess, and I found her well worth study. Her eyes—I used to see them in my dreams during the months that followed, when I had eaten anything that disagreed with me—were green, gray, yellow. They had the opalescent, lazy shine of the swash left by a wave as it crawls back down the beach. There were strange yellow lights in their cool depths, and streak-

ings of brown. For the man who looked into them too long there was madness. Lifted at the corners, in a curious tight fashion that gave an expression of inveterate frivolity, set above hard, round, high little cheekbones that might have belonged to a Kalmuck Tartar, they were eyes indeed to haunt the dreams of the late diner upon indigestibles. Her hair was red. There was no compromise about "Titian gold," or "auburn"—it was royally, rampantly red. She had a great mass of it, and it crinkled and waved as only red hair seems able to do. Her hands were long and white—blue white—unpleasingly white. She was exceedingly thin; such a bundle of nerves and energy could have been nothing but thin. When she shrugged those thin shoulders up to her ears, spread her long, blue-white hands abroad, and elevated them toward her red pompadour eyebrows so light that you could scarcely see them, she was more like a Beardsley poster than anything human and living I had ever seen.

"Give the man something to eat," growled the colonel, as I reached for my sixth muffin. "He's had a twenty-mile drive in the kind of air that makes a fellow hungry."

"Dinner will be served in about an hour," said my hostess serenely. "Ellen had another scrap with Lightfoot. I was afraid she wasn't going to be able to get dinner at all—that's the reason I made sure of this lay-out."

"Lightfoot's got to go," said the colonel. "We can't risk losing Ellen." He turned to me explanatorily. "Ellen is the cook—one of the best in New York. The missus outbid the Ramblers' Club—Ellen had cooked for them for ten years. You don't know what that means out here, where most folks don't have any cooks at all."

"Ellen will have to take care of herself," said Ellen's mistress. "I don't think a scrap now and then hurts her—it keeps her lively—this is such a horribly lonesome, slow place. He only blacked *one* of her eyes this time.

She can see well enough out of the other."

"But surely a man who strikes a woman—" I was breaking in hotly, when the woman leaned back with her everlasting shrug.

"He isn't a man," she drawled; "he's her husband."

I laughed and looked at the colonel. He nodded in solemn confirmation.

"The colonel talks about sending Lightfoot away, for the sake of keeping Ellen. You couldn't keep her on this ranch an hour after Lightfoot was off it. You see," she condescended to explain, "any woman who comes here from the East is likely to get married right away. I had a Swedish girl at first, and I'd talked to her pretty severely about it; asked her what she thought I'd do for a cook if she galloped off with the first cowboy who asked her."

"Yes," chuckled the colonel. "The missus had that one so hypnotized that the poor soul eloped with her cowboy, and left us with nobody to get breakfast."

"No, she didn't," said the red-headed woman, supping her iced beverage luxuriously. "She left you without anybody to get your breakfast. By the time I was up the boy had my chocolate and rolls; and in an hour I had Lightfoot in off the range, in my kitchen, cooking for me. He swore a little—nice new swear words I had never heard before—but he cooked, all right."

The colonel looked at her with a mixture of admiration and reproof. "She took my best range cook away from an outfit that was ready to start for Magdalena with shipping cattle," he explained. "It delayed them two days; I missed the trade, and lost three thousand dollars."

"But I got my cook," supplied the missus placidly. "He did very well, too, till we had Ellen out from New York. Then she was fool enough to marry him; and now, as he gets drunk and beats her, I don't suppose she'll ever give him up."

I began to recognize, in the colonel's

attitude toward his wife, something of the grudging admiration a man gives to the thimble-rigger who has done him. He was chuckling quietly to himself for some time before he broke out:

"There never was anything the missus did that tickled me as much as her highly successful engagement of the book-agent woman as cook."

"I know you thought it was funny," his wife said, "but I never could see why. I'll tell Mr. Bolton about it, and I bet he'll say that I pursued the only sensible and rational course."

"Oh, it was sensible enough. It worked out all right." And again I saw that gleam in the colonel's eye that meant half delight in his wife's methods, and half fear of them.

"This old woman came clear out to the ranch, because the bishop sent her, to sell me the life of Canon—Canon—well, Canon Somebody, I can't think of the name, some old smooth-bore—in forty-seven volumes, more or less. The bishop knew that we were just starting our library, and he intended to have the church well represented. So did I, and I liked the bishop immensely; but when the old woman got here I was out of a cook. She was one of those persons that you just feel sure, the moment you look at them, can do anything they have to do. I asked her if she hadn't the agency for a cook-book, and sort of wheedled her into the kitchen by telling her that I wanted her valuable judgment on the range, the refrigerator and various other kitchen machines. That old woman was the most endless talker I ever heard. You could get her to do almost anything by listening to her talk while she did it. I said to her, 'Let's get dinner—don't you want to help me?'"

The colonel's red-headed wife looked at me out of her variegated eyes with the most devilish expression, and the colonel laughed. "She was a new one," he commented. "She didn't know the fate of people who 'help' you do things."

"She didn't," agreed the missus

comfortably. "Well, I got her nicely started, and laid out the menu before her—it was a pretty elaborate one, because I had a house-party driving over from the G-Bar-Q that night, and going to stay a week with me. Lord, Lord! I'd been wondering where I was going to get a cook; but Providence always looks after the righteous, and you see what it did for me, because I was such a good churchwoman, and a friend of the bishop's. I began to talk to the old person about what a fine cook I saw she was, and let her down easy by saying that I was ashamed to attempt my bungling work in her presence; that she really ought to be teaching cooking classes, and that I'd simply sit back and learn, if she'd allow me. When I saw she knew her business——"

"Haw! haw! Her business!" interjected the colonel.

"It was her business then, when I needed her to do it," retorted his wife. "Well, when I saw that she was going to get me up a first-class dinner for ten, I told her I was tired to death and guessed I'd have to lie down. Then I went upstairs to dress. I had the hardest time getting a cap and apron on her, so she could wait at table. We had quite an argument about that—mere persuasion wouldn't answer. She said the cap was a symbol of servitude, or something like that. I told her, oh, no, that it looked perfectly stunning over her pretty, crimped, white hair. It really did, you know; she was the image of a first-class English maidservant, if she could have been made to keep her mouth shut."

The colonel laughed again.

"She was one of those people," the missus explained, "who are taken with a remark just as other folks are taken with a sneeze—she couldn't do a thing with herself till it was out. The worst of it was that the bishop had been utterly deceived in her—she was a fraud. I shouldn't have minded if she had served us up good sound doctrine with our food; but we had spiritualism with our soup, socialism with

our salad, and she groaned about wine being a mocker, and spoke of the bibber—what on earth's a bibber?—almost every time she filled anybody's glass."

I regarded all this as simply jest; and not till I knew Mrs. Bowie better did I believe that there really had been such a woman who was put through such paces. "And what was the end of it all?" I now asked.

"Oh, she stayed, and cooked for us delightfully the whole week. I think she liked it immensely. I'm sure she never had so many nice people to listen to her—I'm sure she never got so much applause—before in her life."

"She liked it so well," jeered the colonel, "that she ran away. The missus used to spend fully half an hour each day jollying the woman about our not being able to exist without her. She felt us to be an awful responsibility—a family of idiot orphans that fate had dumped into her lap—and she ran away one night."

"Well," said the missus, "it was the very evening my cook was coming from the hotel at Albuquerque. He really came, so I didn't mind if she was gone. She carried my house-party to a triumphant conclusion."

I soon found that the most important thing to me, in the comfort of my new life—as to all who lived under that roof—was my partner's wife. The red-headed woman—though she was young, one never felt tempted to call her a girl—was a force to be reckoned with by all who came within her dominion. She was a superb housekeeper, if so homely a term may be applied to one who sat, like an empress on her throne, and ordered the affairs of her life despotically. For this one fact I didn't know how thankful I ought to be, till her administration was temporarily and violently disturbed.

I remember that Mrs. Bowie said to me, in one of our earliest tête-à-têtes, that she didn't care to be liked; she greatly preferred to be either loved or hated. For the first week or two I was making up my mind which of these emotions she was most likely to

inspire; but I felt no doubt as to the advantage it was to me that my partner was a married man. I have said that her housekeeping meant comfort. I'll add that she was an amusing, if not always an edifying, hostess. She was one of those women with an insane propensity for having their frocks tied on with two strings. Her garments were always dragged about her and fastened in what appeared to be so insecure and inadequate a fashion that the onlooker heaved a sigh of relief when she finally got through a dinner without absolute exposure. Her conversation was clothed in something of the same *risqué* fashion. She never did say anything worse than the mild improprieties women affect who desire to be known as emancipated; and yet you breathed a little freer when "without an oath, she made an end on 't." But so contradictory was the creature that you almost forgave the matter of her speech for the exquisite timbre of the voice which conveyed it.

I came downstairs the morning after my arrival to find the colonel contorted in stertorous and uneasy slumber on a Louis Quinze sofa. He sat up and looked at me sheepishly.

"I get restless spells at night, sometimes, and ghost-walk all over the house," he explained lamely. And then I noticed that he had on the same clothes he had worn at dinner the evening before.

I knew, later, that he did indeed "get restless spells and ghost-walk," when his "sorrel filly" favored him with one of those fantastic and exasperating scenes which had prompted Lightfoot's somewhat figurative description of her.

II

VINDI

"Come in here," called that clear, high voice from the morning-room, some time after my arrival. "I've got something I want to read to you."

Mrs. Bowie was in the most fetching of morning gowns, something black

and silken and clinging, with masses of black thin stuff around her throat and wrists. Except for that fearful suggestion about her that her clothing might slip off at any moment, I thought I had never seen her look so well. Her red hair was piled upon her head, and stuck through with what I at first took to be a stiletto, and saw later was a carved ivory penholder. A curl or two escaped upon her shoulders—she had such a mass of hair. She looked fresh, smiling, almost like other people, in the chequering morning sunlight. I began to think the colonel, considering that he was an old man, had secured a jewel—rather a flawed diamond, a woman I could never have fancied, but a brilliant thing, strangely out of place in his ranch house. Of course, I knew afterward that this was exactly what she intended me to think; but for the first few weeks I was so little on my guard that I took the impression she gave, as though I had been at a primary school and she the teacher.

She was sitting at a long table littered with papers.

"Good morning," I said. "You look fearfully industrious in here."

The colonel was established at the other end of the room with his mail, and a breakfast tray on a tabouret beside him. He nodded a brief greeting, and went back to his letters with an air of relief as I sat down opposite his wife.

"I am—exactly that," she answered cheerfully. "When I work I rush as though the Judgment Day were at hand. I'm writing a book. Isn't it absurd? But then, one must do something, and I have such gorgeous literary material at hand."

"A Western novel?" I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders, that everlasting shrug that was beginning to get on my nerves, and spread her blue-white hands abroad; those eyebrows which must have been there, but which nobody could see, evidently ran up toward the low-lying waves of her red pompadour. "Oh, as to that—it's a story of the heart. I

haven't decided just where I'll locate it. I thought some of North Africa—we spent a winter on the Nile. I've put the colonel in it."

I jumped, and looked over my shoulder. The colonel was apparently deep in his letters. I turned back to find the red-headed woman grinning maliciously, and had the sensation of one who is caught in a slovenly trap. "Oh, he knows it," she commented carelessly. "Or, rather, he doesn't—he will never know it. I read whole chapters to him, taken from life, absolute portraits of his soul, and he swears they're not the least bit like—and goes to sleep. The colonel snores abominably."

I looked around nervously once more and caught the tip of a grin under the colonel's grizzled mustache. It was a sardonic grin, and did not express delight; yet I was sure he had no specific objection to being in the book.

"I've put you in, too," the missus went on abruptly.

"Flattered, I'm sure," I muttered weakly. Mrs. Bowie had a habit of talking in a series of what might be called figuratively verbal bombshells, which was a little wearing—particularly before breakfast.

"May I have some coffee?" I asked.

"Oh-cheese-it will bring it in here," she said. "I'm going to read some of the book to you. Don't look so scared; I'll throw water in your face when you faint—and I'll quit when you're dead," she added flippantly.

You never knew what to expect from the red-headed woman. When you had comfortably made up your mind that she was a fool, that her pretense of intellect was a pose, she astonished you with some display of brilliance that knocked your conclusions all awry. That book was hot stuff. If the good-for-nothing creature could have been made to finish it—if she'd needed a dinner, and had no other way of earning it—there would have been a future for it, I'm sure. Of course, her portrait of the colonel was exaggerated; but a more devilishly witty bit of exaggeration I have never listened to.

I felt that it was unkind to be so much amused at the clever caricature; but the sight of his qualities, touched atilt—askew—while he placidly read his mail, proved more than once too much for my risibles, and I laughed till I brought his calm gaze around on us. Then I was more ashamed than ever, and muttered something about its being very amusing but ridiculously unlike.

There was a creature in the story—the kind of impossible phenix that women create when they think they're after a hero—a cross between a brigand and a Sunday-school superintendent, with side excursions toward a matinee darling—that struck me with peculiar loathing. When she finished her chapter she looked at me sideways out of those long green eyes of hers, and said to me softly:

"Rawleigh"—Rawleigh was the beast's name—"is drawn from your delightful self."

"Oh, rot!" I exclaimed, leaping to my feet. One was never choice in one's epithets in talking to Mrs. Bowie.

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared the colonel from where he sat, the mail dropped in his lap, regarding us both with shrewd, narrowed eyes.

The colonel is nobody's fool. I was beginning to wonder whose fool I was.

III

VICTUS

DESPITE her real cleverness, her undeniable intellect and fine gifts, the red-headed woman was an inveterate *poseuse*. She was a woman who would invent a situation for the sake of using a phrase. For the first month or two matters went pretty smoothly; I saw afterward that my advent was the reason for this; I furnished the missus an intelligent audience for her scenes and posturings. However, if I was an intelligent, I was always an extremely unwilling, onlooker. I was expected, of course, to think that the

lady had sacrificed herself when she married a man in every way her superior, though very considerably her senior. Nobody could be about Colonel Bowie without conceiving a very genuine respect for him, and this in my case ripened rapidly into a hearty affection. It went against my grain to be made the means of annoying him.

But the red-headed woman was a spell-binder; she used to put me through my paces. I would make up my mind that never again—never again—should she draw me into any of her monkey business; then I pattered down the stairs like a little mouse into a trap, heard that gurgling voice of hers, like vocal honey, caught the glint of those yellow-gray-green eyes—and I was lost.

It wasn't that the creature attracted me. As an individual I loathed her; but she was such a startling novelty you never could tell what the witch would do next.

I hadn't been long at the ranch before I understood the colonel's position. Poor old soul! She had him worked up to about the limit twenty times a day—and she'd look as impish as a pickaninny sitting on the steam valve of a racing Mississippi River steamboat. Bless you! She had no idea of the explosive nature of the thing she was holding down. The scenes through which we two men were dragged—for, whatever my resolution, I was always hauled in if she could reach me—the scenes that ate into our very souls, and made us ready to cut and run, or to strangle her, and ashamed to look each other in the face—were meat and drink to her as well as delight.

A typical engagement was the battle of the Jersey cow. The red-headed woman had ordered a registered Jersey with a cream-and-butter record, from an Eastern cattle dealer, paying three hundred dollars for it, a piece of folly and senseless extravagance that made the colonel wince. The animal had arrived at Socorro fagged from the journey, and a thick-witted cow-

puncher killed her by driving her too hard over to the ranch. Mrs. Bowie was fresh from the distress of seeing the pretty creature die.

"If you will employ such brute beasts for cowboys," she opened up, "I suppose no one need ever be surprised at results. You get me another cow, and have her here inside of a month, or I'll go to Chicago for the winter. I can get something decent to eat there."

"It wasn't Buster's fault," remonstrated the colonel. "He didn't know how to handle the poor little sick thing. Jersey cattle ought not to be brought out here. I ordered a case of evaporated cream—Lightfoot fetched it when he went after the cow."

"Oh, you did?" sneered the red-headed woman. "Didn't I tell you I wouldn't have any of that canned cow in my house? If I have to live in this God-forsaken hole, at least I'll have enough to eat. Evaporated cream! You get that cow here for me inside of three weeks."

"You've got fifteen range cows in the milk pen now," muttered the colonel. "It looks as if that might furnish cream enough for three people."

"I didn't marry you and come into this fag end of the world to be starved. Range cows!" in deep scorn, "poor devils that give about a pint of blue-John apiece! You get me that cow—and get it quick. I believe now that Buster killed this one just to spite me."

"Don't just try to be a fool, Lorelei," suggested the colonel, with angry contempt. "I should think even you might know that a cowpuncher can't be got to take proper care of these little delicate, finicky Jersey cows; that's why I don't want one on my—on the ranch."

"You can get people to do anything that you want done, and have the money to pay for it. I'll have a Jersey cow, and I'll engage to make Lightfoot take proper care of it. You have no control of your men; they call you Bill, and do as they please; but they'll not abuse my cattle."

Colonel Bowie prided himself upon his discipline; yet there was just truth enough in what the jade said to infuriate him. He flamed a dark crimson.

"What my men call me doesn't matter. They go into all sorts of danger for me and my interests; they face death for me, if it's necessary——"

"And kill your wife's cows, when you want a little trick of that sort done," put in the missus.

The colonel refused to take up the absurd taunt, and began instead:

"You don't have the first idea of what a cowpuncher on the range is; he's a soldier, and his employer is his officer. He goes hungry, and through all sorts of weather, risking his life without a word, at his superior's order; and you rave and tear and sneer because such a man isn't a limber, slick-tongued lackey. A fellow you had broken in to suit your notions I'd have to fire."

"You would!" snorted the red-headed woman. "I've known this thing for some time; but I didn't think you'd come right out and say it. A man that I train—that pleases and suits me—has to go! You hear that, Mr. Bolton——?"

"Lorelei," said the colonel, with forced quietness, "it's nothing short of devilish the way you warp and twist one's words. Neither you nor Mr. Bolton nor anybody else believes for a moment that I meant any such thing as you pretend."

"See here, Colonel Bowie," flashed his wife, "you're like all these darned old mossback cattlemen; you are willing to work like a mule and live like a hog—but I won't live that way. No, by George! and when I send for some reasonable luxury—necessity, I call it—and you let your hirelings destroy it before it comes to my hand, you can just replace it. Yes, and sing small, too. You have no more regard for elegance and comfort in your home than a prairie dog—but I'll not live in a dog hole to please you!"

As her spirits rose and her malicious fluency and invention throve, her

partner sank more and more into mere helpless rage.

"Don't be a fool!" he reiterated.

"I can't help it—I was born that way," flared the missus. "Everybody mentioned it when I married you!"

The words are simple enough—one might think to hear them repeated that they could pass as a jest; but the venom, the aggravation that woman infused into them would have roused rage in the wooden bosom of a cigar-store Indian. The colonel swore.

"Yes, curse—do. Thank God, we have no children to be contaminated by your vile language."

The expletives he had used were not in any way worse than many which went to make up the missus's daily vocabulary; but she managed a very dramatic little shudder, and her husband glared at her speechlessly.

"Mr. Bolton knows——"

"Oh, my God! yes—Mr. Bolton knows," mimicked the colonel. "What Mr. Bolton doesn't know about matrimonial scrapping, after living in this house six months, would go on a post-card!"

The red-headed woman snickered approval. She was pleasantly stimulated by this unseemly set-to which left the colonel throbbing in a very fever of impotent fury, shame, bitterness, and me cold with distaste. She showed the agreeable effect of it all through the dinner, at which she wore an unusually elaborate and elegant costume, and talked with more than her ordinary random brilliance.

Indeed, I never knew an uncommonly disgusting row to occur, of her stirring up, that she wasn't around inside of an hour, as smiling and chipper as you please, with, "Say, old man, did you see that string of stuff in the *World* about Jim Bramhall?" or, "Oh, Mr. Bolton, come, let's sing this new do-funny—I've got the accompaniment all practiced up."

Then we men would fairly grind our fool teeth; which was another mark of her dominance. Yet it was right in the midst of this sort of thing that I

saw the colonel score; and the scene was curiously enlightening and suggestive. I was never quite as sure—afterward—that the obvious, with these two people, was the truth, and the whole unalterable truth.

Colonel Bowie spoke to his wife one day at the table concerning her health. One of her rings had dropped, rattling, into her plate, and he asked suddenly: "What finger did you have that on, Lorelei?"

For answer she held up her hand, wiped the ring with her napkin, and slipped it back in place.

"It was a tight fit when I gave it to you," he pursued. "Are you thinner than you were then? Do you think you would be better in California this summer?"

The red-headed woman looked at him with meek astonishment. "I suppose I am a few pounds lighter than usual," she began; "but how would you and Mr. Bolton run the ranch without me?"

Then it was that the colonel made his point. He glanced at me and laughed. "It might be lonesome," he said, "but it would be good lonesome—eh, Art?"

The bald sincerity of his tone seemed to carry conviction. His wife rose with a pale face and bitten lip.

"I believe I'll walk on the terrace outside, if you will excuse me," she said gently; "it's oppressive in here."

I had seen the shine of tears in her eyes as she passed me, and I glanced at the colonel wonderingly; but he was not noticing. And I saw in that moment how he might have tamed her, if only the old fellow could have been indifferent; if he could have refused to rise to her bait when she wanted a row, and have cultivated an appearance of unconcern where she and her doings were in question.

She was an active campaigner—the red-headed woman; when she was not making the colonel's life a burden to him, she was apt to be diverting herself with me.

She got me down at the easel one day, pretending to teach me to paint.

She whispered in my ear that the colonel was just outside on the gallery, that she saw him staring in at us, and that she was going to make him jealous. I knew—if she didn't—that the colonel didn't give a hoot for what she did; that he would be rather glad to see her making up to some other fool. But I sat there and wig-wagged the brush as she told me to, and let her take my hand and move it around, and snuggle her chin almost into my neck, till, so help me Moses, I got chills at the roots of my hair. The six-shooter is a ready and reliable argument in such matters, out West; and I knew the colonel might feel himself obliged to resort to it, even though, as a matter of fact, he had no personal bias on the question. So when the missus put her long arm across my shoulder and pushed my cheek around to make me look at something, I jumped up and spilled the paints in every direction, and yelled to her that she was in a fair way to disgrace herself and me.

Gad! I'll never forget her look, as she sat there on the floor, and cut her eye up at me and laughed. I felt that she was reading me through and through—my scare of the six-shooter, and all.

"Disgraced?" she inquired vivaciously. "Do you think so? Lord, I wish I might. I always thought it would be perfectly, deliciously delightful to be thoroughly disgraced. My parents had fool ideas about such matters, and they hung on to me."

"I'll bet you whizzed 'em around while they hung," I cut in viciously.

"I'll bet I did!" she cried cheerfully. "I've got two brothers that are the two biggest fools in the State of California; they used to be always using your favorite word, disgraced—bah, disgraced!—but they never gave me a chance to be really disgraced. Then comes the colonel—I see you're afraid of him all right. Oh, Lord!" and she sprang up, laughing, and ran to the window, "a bright woman has no chance in this world."

"I suppose you think being disgraced

is the next thing to being famous," I flung after her wrathfully.

She turned and regarded me over her shoulder. "Yes—the next thing *above* being famous," she retorted. "Being famous is a stupid, middle-class sort of thing—a lot of old tabbies and common people running after you. Just think how infinitely nicer it is to be thoroughly disgraced, and see all the fools running the other way—scared at the sight of you—thinking that some of the disgrace will rub off on them if they touch you—jimminy! I think it would be perfectly jolly!"

But after that I avoided the studio as though there'd been a case of plague in it, till my hostess went so far as to protest. "You haven't had a painting lesson for a week," pouted Mrs. Bowie.

"I fancied you were busy on the colonel's portrait," I replied evasively and coldly, and then regretted the mention of my partner. For, after an unusually bitter set-to over some trivial matter, the colonel had ridden away to one of the far camps, and he had been gone for the greater part of a week.

"Oh, the colonel's portrait—yes; you ought to see that I've made some improvements in it"—her voice hesitated an instant, then went on, with a queer sort of "grate" in its tone of usual light gibing—"from memory—since he left so animatedly last Wednesday."

I flashed a quick look at her; but, if I had been right in my surmise, she was quicker than I, for her face wore only its expression of impish mischief.

The portrait to which I had alluded was a dashing sketch in oils. I had watched with fascinated eyes while the red-headed woman laid in most of the values and worked out the masses with her palette knife, scorning the slower brush, and buttering the pigment on with a sweep and turn of the wrist which bespoke power and a wonderful command of her materials.

The last time I saw it the colonel's quizzical smile was beginning to emerge

from the chaos of light and shade, and the picture promised to be a masterly portrait. Now she caught my hand and pulled me into the little studio. The square of canvas stood, covered, on an easel. With a dramatic gesture she drew the cloth away and fell back.

"I've made some improvements since you saw it last. The colonel's soul looks out now—the colonel as I know him—the colonel as he is. I'm thinking of setting up as a soul-painter—'Portraits of souls executed at short notice.'"

She was rattling on, with her eyes fixed upon my face. In the surprise of the moment I let slip an oath. "It's a damned shame!" I cried, "and you're a—" I turned and looked at her.

"Oh, say it, say it! Finish up." She sank to the floor, sitting in her usual impish fashion, as though she hadn't a bone in her body and rocking herself to and fro in exaggerated gusts of laughter. "I never was 'cussed out'—not to my face. Why did you stop at the most interesting point? What were you going to call me? What am I?"

"I'll be hanged if I know!" I muttered, as I looked upon the colonel's defaced, degraded portrait. The kindly eyes, with creases about them which partly signified shrewdness, and came partly from searching great distances for straying cattle on an open plain, leered at me from the canvas. They were the same eyes, but the shrewdness had become unspeakably base. The gray mustache was bristled out, the gray hair raised and flying, to give a hirsute, faun-like suggestion—vigorous, but vile.

Stay—the hair was raised and curled in two little spirals above the temples in an unmistakable suggestion of the satyr's horns. His brows were slanted upward at the outer corners; the centre of his lower lip protruded—just a shade more than it ought—just a shade—and yet the effect was satanic.

"Well, haven't I hit him off?" she gasped, when she could get breath from laughing.

I looked at her, and thought the laughter overdone; but then, what was not overdone about Mrs. Bowie?

"You seem to find it funny," I said rudely. "I think it's a shameful caricature—a devilish piece of work. It was a fiend's trick so to distort—so malign——"

"Oh, hold up!" objected the colonel's lady. And again that strange "grate" was in her soft, drawling voice. "You're not married to the old boy—mind that. Men vary—but husbands are all alike. Gosh!"—she leaped to her feet—"there's an idea! That's what I'm going to call it—'Portrait of a Husband.' I'll exhibit it at the Art League's spring show. You bet it'll draw."

I had a faint, sickish feeling, as I looked at her. One never could tell how much of jest, how much of deviltry, there was in her talk. I don't think she knew herself.

"Cheer up," she commented on my dejected attitude and appearance. "Cheer up, my boy—I might paint your portrait some day."

The worst thing about Mrs. Bowie was that she made you feel inexpressibly silly if you gave utterance to a decent sentiment in her presence.

"Paint my portrait!" I echoed. "And name it, too, I suppose. I'll be hanged if you do."

"You might be—but hardly on that evidence alone, you know," she answered demurely.

"You wouldn't take the trouble to paint a picture of me. You've neither got a grudge at me—nor—nor——"

"Nor what?" And for once those lazy green eyes flashed with real anger.

"Nor the other thing," I supplied, risking the shot at last, and was rewarded by seeing her face crimson.

"Silly! stupid!" she stormed. "Do you suppose a woman of my originality would do so bourgeois, so middle-class a thing, as to be in love with her own husband?"

Soon after this I went Southwest to a place about a hundred miles distant, that Colonel Bowie and I were build-

ing up for a breeding ranch. A wild, savagely beautiful, broken country I was in, of volcanic formation, and offering fine shelter for the cows and calves, with its mountain ranges and deep cañons; while the long, magnificent draws were thickly grassed, and we had more than one fine spring. But it was heart-breakingly lonely. I never saw any living soul except my own two or three cowpunchers—and I saw them only occasionally—or some rare freighter, cow-hunter, horse-rustler or prospector. Neighbors there were none within forty miles.

There I learned, in a long six months, during which I more than once yearned for the comforts of El Nido, what ordinary bachelor ranching is. As I "wolfed it" alone, or ate the grub of some casual cowpuncher cook—and ate it mighty gladly, you understand—I used to think of the red-headed woman's dining-room, with its Flemish oak fittings, its steins upon the wall, its quaint leaded cabinets of fine china and lustrous silver, and, best of all, its charming table bright with snowy linen, cut-glass and dainty china, and spread with one of big Ellen's triumphs. And the petted animal in me could have fairly wept for it all.

IV

THRALDOM

It was shortly after my return that I spoke out finally to the individual whom Mrs. Bowie, in her usual frivolous fashion, called Oh-cheese-it. He was, indeed, the man I had first fancied him, one who wore a title before his name in his native country, was a graduate of my own Alma Mater, who chose to call himself Ochayso, and, for no obvious reason, to act as butler in the Bowie household. Dignified, mysterious, impassive, with a clear-cut, fine little face and bright, dark eyes that saw everything without appearing to see anything, the young Japanese struck an odd, fascinating note in the missus's menage. I could see that he

was no good as auditor to the scenes in which my lady delighted. He went through them like an automaton. And yet, being a fellow-man, and in some senses a fellow-sufferer, it did not take me a week to find that it was adoration for the red-headed woman which held him in his position.

"Come, now," I said to the Japanese, as we stood talking over some mutual acquaintances of ours at the University, "you're a man and a gentleman; for God's sake, why do you stay here setting tables and carrying in hot plates for that vixen?"

"I beg," said Ochayso, in his monotonous voice, regarding me with melancholy eyes, "that you will not allude to Her"—I found afterward he never called the missus anything but "Her," as though she were the only feminine thing in the world—"in such terms. She is misunderstood. She is unhappy. She suffers——"

"She's married," I supplied to wind up the series.

Ochayso bowed, and spread out his hands in Oriental fashion. "She's imprisoned, enslaved—I have no English word for what I want—tied to that—that person. But time must free her. If not soon, there must come a day when she will need a friend to turn to. I await that day."

I looked at him, and I pitied him. A man of fine intellect, a man to stand well, to be a leader among his own people, in his own country—it was another example of the devilish influence of the red-headed woman.

"What do your folks—your parents—think of this business?" I asked, with well-meaning impertinence.

Ochayso passed over the impertinence, evidently because of the kindly intention.

"I have no near ties," he answered me. "My estates are being administered by a steward. I had made promises—vows, it is true; but a—what must I call it?—I have not the word—a vocation like this absolves one from all former vows."

Of course, it isn't to be denied that I used to see gleams of something better

in the red-headed woman, but I give you my word I came to have a superstitious feeling about anyone she championed, for she seemed to have true consideration only for the under dog. By behaving yourself, doing those things you ought to do and leaving undone those you should shun, you made yourself a foeman worthy of the missus's steel—you were there for her to fight or make fun of.

Maybe I was a bit crude in my judgment of her; however that may be, I have seen since that I never gave the woman full credit for any kindly thing she did. I used to think that she loved a row, and for that reason championed the cause of the fallen.

I remember that there was a woman at the G-Bar-Q, a young daughter-in-law of the house, who was fearfully talked about. She was half-Spanish, and her husband's people had always considered his marriage a disgrace. When the son was nearly killed at a round-up they sent him up to Albuquerque for an operation, which it was hoped would do some good; and they pretty nearly turned that poor girl out on the bald plain—said she was preparing to elope with a cowboy.

Mrs. Bowie brought her in to the ranch house at El Nido one day—found her halfway to the station with her cowboy, it seemed. She sent the man off pretty well shaken up, and when the colonel remonstrated she gave him the balance of the thunderstorm.

"There is a lack of common decency in men and old women that is hard to believe," she declared. "Here's this girl—nineteen years old—they've made her life a hell over there at the Hamiltons'; Tony" (her husband) "along with the rest, I suppose. I suppose he did—I just judge that he treated her like a dog—because she is as devoted as a dog to him, and swears he never gave her a cross word. Then, when he's hurt and sent to the hospital, and they think he may die under the operation, they deny the poor wretch the miserable privilege of going with him. That's why she was with Kan-

sas Jim—he was going to take her to Albuquerque. I do think a family row is the nastiest thing! I'll never have any——"

"No, you'll never have any family rows, because you'll jump on the necks of all your family and choke the breath out of them before they can put in a word of remonstrance about your imprudent doings," the colonel snorted.

I am persuaded that he cared nothing about her bringing the girl home. I think he himself was right-minded enough to have helped the poor soul out. But the missus just struck him wrong.

"I want the money for her expenses to Albuquerque—hers and mine," snapped the red-headed woman. "I'll not send her there to face the crew alone. I'm going along and tell Susan Hamilton what I think of her." The missus often ran up to Albuquerque, when things got too dull for her at the ranch.

"What do you have to mix yourself up in every scandal for? That sort of thing draws some women—they run to it as though it were a bargain sale."

The girl was upstairs, where she could probably hear every word. The missus rose and cast one look of wrathful contempt at her husband as she sailed out of the room. I looked up and found Ochayso's beady black eyes fixed upon me with more meaning in them than he generally permitted. For once in a way, the red-headed woman had right on her side, and the colonel was wretchedly in the wrong. But mistakes like that are only human; and it was her fault, anyhow, for she nagged him into such expressions.

No word passed between the Japanese and myself concerning this matter; but I began to see of what shreds and patches he had built, and was building, his idol.

I wondered at the fidelity of the little man; he had a good deal to put up with. The red-headed woman was an interesting talker. She was passionately fond of the West, although she affected a sneering attitude toward its crudity; she told me some of the

best stories of the careless heroism of its cattlemen and cowboys that I have ever heard.

One which concerned itself with an adventure in the desert and the nobility of a man who would not go out of it alive and leave his companion in it dead, she concluded with, "That was the only man I ever cared a snap of my finger about." The red-headed woman could always be depended upon for dramatic climaxes. That was one for Ochayso, who was at work within earshot.

I sat, turned away from her, chuckling; I had something up my sleeve which, I fancied, would even up some scores between us. "That fellow was a man," she said. "He was a hero."

"Yes," I agreed, turning upon her, "the colonel is a hero. I've been thinking all along that you didn't appreciate him—but I'm glad to hear that he's the only man you ever loved—few husbands can congratulate themselves on as much."

For the colonel had told me that desert story himself. Shorn of her extravagance, it was just the sort of pluck and fidelity one would have expected of such a man.

The missus had leaped to her feet and stood fairly glaring at me.

"The colonel!" she cried. "The idea of—! What a—! Did he tell you? Did he dare pretend that he was the man who—who——?"

She was fairly nonplussed. But the red-headed woman was never fatuous. She knew when she had lost a trick—whether from sheer bad luck or by her own folly. One look at my face seemed to prove to her that it was not worth while to go further with that line of argument. With an unintelligible exclamation she swept from the room, her small, fair face an intense crimson from the roots of her red hair and the little ears down to where the line of delicate lace marked the edge of her open-necked summer bodice; and as she went past me, her gauzes and ribbons fluttering about her, I noticed that she was white around the mouth, like a sick child.

V

ECCLESIASTICAL

I LEARNED much from the visit of the bishop; a man in the thick of the fight cannot quite estimate the row. Mrs. Bowie's treatment of her husband was, after all, only a revelation of her as a wife, and not as a woman. Where they touched myself, her performances were so objectionable that I knew I could not properly judge them—one can hardly be expected to tell, by the feeling, what pattern is being branded on one with a hot iron. But the bishop was a distinct revelation to me.

He was a good man, with a sound heart and a slow intellect. Colonel Bowie had told me of his devotion in preferring his lean, hungry Western diocese to the flesh-pots of the East, because he knew his people, and felt he could accomplish more good there than another. It seemed to me that the most irreverent cowboy would have spared the bishop's naïve dullness, for the sake of his compensating goodness.

The missus was a churchwoman, with an Episcopalian's respect for the clergy. Of course, there must be a pose assumed to dazzle and astound the bishop. I really was in two minds as to whether she would have preferred the role of saint or sinner; but pose she must.

She got us together and harangued us frankly as to how we were to behave during the bishop's stay. She made no pretense of thinking ill of certain things which she desired kept out of the bishop's sight or knowledge, but she was fully aware that he would misinterpret.

"See here," broke in the colonel suddenly and brutally—he had no idea how to combat her without being brutal—"see here, you behave yourself while the bishop's in the house—that's the main thing. I put up with your infernal foolishness at other times; but while John Sheldon's here I want you to behave—behave——"

"Oh, I'll behave," laughed the red-headed woman; "I'm death on behaving behaviors. I just want to make sure that the rest of you will second me becomingly."

The bishop had a fatal lack when it came to appreciating the red-headed woman—he lacked a sense of humor. He was a good man—he *was* a good man; large, fair, placid, benevolent. If the red-headed woman had been in financial straits; had she been the mother of ten children, anxious to take in washing and support them; a rich woman, concerned about her own soul—had she been any of these, the bishop would have known what to do for her.

As it was, she bewildered him, she troubled him; she made her swift and desperate passes at being what she thought the bishop would fancy most, changed her mind about it before he had actually found out what she was at, assumed a dozen different mental poses in as many sentences, and left the good man stunned—groping.

Having, as she conceived, made an honest trial of pleasing the bishop, and failed, she veered with her usual disconcerting suddenness to trying how thoroughly she could shock him. When the red-headed woman set herself to shock people an electrical eel was nothing. The bishop's eyes—they were already big and blue—widened and widened, till they were quite round and sad and meaningless. His lower lip trembled as he addressed her, not with terror, but with sheer nervousness. One could fancy that he restrained himself from jumping, or saying, "Ouch!" when she let off those short, sharp sentences which were to her verbal progress through a conversation as the toots to a fast express.

It was at the dinner-table the last day of the bishop's visit that I realized how purely the red-haired woman's power was a hypnotism, and how it sank into impotence before courage and real goodness.

She set in to tell profane conundrums, and, after vainly urging the bishop to reply, to answer them herself.

"Why don't they build mills on the Mississippi?" she inquired pertly.

"I was not aware that there were no such structures on that stream," fenced the bishop ponderously. Poor man! He had never heard the silly riddle.

"They don't build mills on the Mississippi because dam it they can't!" crowed the red-headed woman. And the colonel looked murderous.

But the bishop had apparently made up his mind to endure her to the end with such patience as might be. With horrified eyes he watched her skirt conversational abysses; his gaze was glued to her as she danced on dizzy edges of moral precipices.

"Why was John the Baptist like a penny?" came the next foolish query.

"I trace no resemblance between St. John and—er—a coin of that denomination," objected the bishop, with strong distaste.

"Why, a penny's one cent, isn't it?"

The bishop could not deny this statement, so he reluctantly nodded a grudging assent.

"And John the Baptist was one sent by God."

Poor old Colonel Bowie stood his torture like an Indian at the stake. The bishop had all along plainly kept things smooth for his friend's sake alone; now a glance at that friend's set, suffering face seemed to decide him. Suddenly—if one could imagine anything about the bishop being sudden—he appeared to resolve that he would bear it no longer.

"Madam," he opened up on her sonorously, shutting off thereby an inquiry as to where the devil would go if he should lose his tail, "madam, it is quite immaterial. The impropriety of your speech is not atoned for by what I see you put forward as wit."

The bishop was coming out famously.

"What you lack," he went on, without giving her a moment to reply, "seems to be the moral sense. I find its absence in you upon every question which we have so far discussed. You have not cared for the rights or comfort of others. You would do well to

search your heart in this matter, and to pray that grace may be given you. I hope I do not underestimate the miracles which divine grace is able to work——"

The bishop looked discouraged, and as though he really suspected that he did, just at that moment.

"—but I assure you, madam, it seems to me the only thing which would be able to reach your case."

The red-headed woman looked at the bishop with real respect and interest. "I think you're just right," she agreed mildly, even meekly. "I wish you'd take my case in hand."

The colonel's eyes were on his plate, the red rose dark under the tan on his cheeks. For myself, I was divided between mirth and painful sympathy. But the bishop shook his head obstinately as we all rose and went into the parlors. He was a sensible man; if he was slow in coming to a conclusion, at least he knew what he knew, that conclusion once reached.

"No, madam," he fairly snorted. "My statement was that divine grace was needed alone in your case."

"Oh, but the instrument—there must be an instrument through which the hearts of sinners are reached," the red-headed woman protested, almost in tears.

"Divine grace is vouchsafed to the penitent on his knees," returned the bishop. "You need the attitude of repentance; you need to seek your salvation earnestly. You are puffed up in your own esteem; you need to be sorry, to be ashamed, contrite—to be brayed as in a mortar." And his voice was clear and sharp. He plainly meant to make the job a good one, now that he was upon it.

"O-o-oh! puffed up!" murmured the red-headed woman remonstrantly, looking down over her almost attenuated long slenderness.

Colonel Bowie and I went out on the terrace to smoke, leaving the sensible bishop refusing to be the instrument of Mrs. Bowie's redemption, recommending to her repentance, humility and good works.

"Oh, my God!" groaned the colonel.
 "Listen to that!"

"Never mind, sir," I urged sympathetically. "The bishop will know how to take her."

"That's just what he will not," grieved my companion. "I don't mind you so much, Art—you're a good fellow—you've been a comfort to me; for you're young—flexible—not much older than she is. But I've talked to John Sheldon. He—we're about the same age. He'll think—Lord! and just consider how she could please him if she'd only quit cutting up and try." And he stared with hot, reproachful eyes to where Mrs. Bowie made her unseemly advances to the clergyman.

After the bishop was gone the missus was unusually sunny with those about her. She felt pleased with herself.

"He's a dear old boy," she said, leaning her red head back till her nose pointed toward the ceiling and blowing thin rings of cigarette smoke, which she regarded through luxuriantly narrowed eyes. "A good old boy is the bishop, according to his lights. I'll bet I'd make him jump, though, if I painted his portrait."

"Jump!" I said; "you underestimate your powers."

"Do you think so?" she laughed, cocking that wicked red head of hers on one side and regarding the colonel and me through a haze of smoke. "I might attempt a portrait from memory—and send it after him. An Early Rose potato has something of his expressive cast of countenance—his clear-cut features. And he has the true gander eye—round and blue and silly. Yes, the gander eye—that's it."

The colonel's chair went over with a slam as he jumped up and got himself out of the room, not venturing to utter a word. I guessed why.

But the red-headed woman took the cigarette from her mouth, squinted up her green eyes and looked after his violently retreating form in mild surprise.

"What's up with the old boy?" she inquired, with over-acted innocence.

VI

RESPIRE

BUT the first real hint I had as to where I stood came from old Lightfoot. I overheard him discussing myself and Mrs. Bowie with some freedom down at the corral one day. I was just about to walk in and have it out with him, when my steps were arrested by the words of the cowpuncher to whom he was talking.

"He ain't to blame none," drawled that worthy.

"Lord, no!" agreed Lightfoot heartily. "Ef the missus was to fool with a real live man like she fools with that sissy, they'd be somethin' doin' in no time. But, all the same, ef I was the old man and my woman done so I'd take a hand. Gosh! w'y, I'd let daylight through him for a-slightin' of his opportunities—damned ef I wouldn't!"

I retired without making myself known—which is euphony for "I slunk away." The epithet applied to me was coarse and unpleasing; the code of morals—or immorals—in the West is too complicated for me quite to grasp. Yet I felt that Jonah Lightfoot was a decent man beside me, and entitled to say what he pleased. I suppressed the frantic, impotent rage I had so often seen in the colonel's face. I wished, childishly and futilely, that Jonah had been put through what I had; and I hated—oh, how I did hate!—that red-headed woman.

It was an intolerable position. Whichever way I turned my attitude must savor of unmanliness. To Jonah Lightfoot and his likes I was a thin-blooded Joseph, gathering my garments about me and fleeing from the overtures of the missus. To the colonel I felt sure that I was another fool, furnishing a sort of figure for his wife's folly and devilish caprice to exploit itself upon. I sometimes thought it was hard on the colonel that I responded so little to his wife's obvious advances. It seemed to me that he might come to hate me because I gave him no cause for jealousy. I won-

dered if it would be a kindness to him to relieve her folly with some touch of responsive foolishness.

To the missus herself—and there was the spot that wrought my impatience to frenzy—I knew that I was a matter of total indifference, except as I could be made an instrument of torture to her husband, a source of impish amusement to herself, a diversion for long, dull days. She remembered I was a man, but she forgot that I was a human being, with feelings and self-respect of my own.

The whole thing tangled around me, wellnigh unbearable, suffocating like a snare of cobwebs. I determined to brush them aside.

"Mrs. Bowie," I began one evening when we had set in for a long twilight tête-à-tête on the terrace—how those things came about no mere man could ever say; but order my life as I would, each day of it closed with such a sentimental opportunity with my partner's wife—"Mrs. Bowie, I wish you'd let me talk to you about something which occupies my mind a great portion of the time."

The red-headed woman swung her slender foot in its high-heeled slipper, and contemplated me with demure satisfaction. "Talk!" she echoed; "talk! Why, dear me, the inference of that solemn speech is that I talk so much you are not able to get in a word edgeways."

I saw what she was expecting, and was filled with a brutal exultation at the thought of her coming disappointment. "I should like to tell you, in the first place, what brought me out here," I began.

"The Denver & Rio Grande—from Chicago, anyhow," the red-headed woman cut in flippantly.

"I was born into a circle," I went on doggedly, "where everybody had more money than I, and where all of us had traditions that kept us out of trade."

The red-headed woman whistled and clapped her hands softly. "And I was born in a circle—no, it wasn't a circle, it was a triangle, I guess—where every yap scrambled for himself. I

don't know what my folks were, back in Kentucky; I was born after they'd lived in San Francisco five years. Pa was broken down in health, and ma was keeping boarders. We had a gay old crowd at the house when I was big enough to remember them; there were six gamblers, a Scotch earl's son—and he was about the worst of the lot—two preachers, and an actor that I was in love with."

"Of course you were," I returned shortly, "or you tried to make him believe so—it's a way you have."

"Think so?" queried my companion. "Ask the colonel. He wouldn't agree with you. Hey—oh, hey! the colonel!" The red-headed woman rose and trailed her magnificence the length of the terrace and back. "Oh-cheese-it ought to bring us some fresh tea," she observed, as she returned; "this is tepid. Well, then, you were born in the purple—or rather, the others about you were, and yours was only a pale heliotrope, so you came out here to mend your fortune with spoils from the barbarians—is that it?"

The red-headed woman could always repeat your most innocent remarks so that they sounded like disgustful boastings; what need I expect when I attempted heart-to-heart revelations? Yet I went on:

"You put it, as usual, extravagantly; but I was poor, and she wasn't."

My listener turned and looked down at me with a touch of real interest—interest in me, I mean, not in what she could make me do. "By George!" she said softly, "you've got some pluck."

"Thanks, very much," I returned. "I don't pretend to be more self-abnegating than other men, but I wanted the thing a little more equal before I tried to make the running with Constance."

"With who?" inquired the red-headed woman sharply and ungrammatically.

"Constance Bleecker," I returned. "I've known her since we were children. I never cared about anybody else; I never dreamed of marrying any-

body else; and when I got old enough to know anything about such things I realized that if I wanted Constance I should have to hustle for about a quarter of a million. I'm hustling. The colonel thinks, with the money I have to invest, the information he can give me, and my willingness to stay here and look after the thing, I might double my capital in five years."

"The colonel knows," said the colonel's wife. "He wasn't born in the purple—or even the lavender. He's had to hustle; he'll not make any mistake."

Again I felt that I was a tenderfoot, and the missus only kind-heartedly unwilling to say so.

"You don't correspond with her," she remarked the next moment; and I felt a little thrill of disgust at the bold assumption that my mail was under this woman's espionage.

"I haven't heard from her since I came here," I returned morosely. "There have been bereavements in her family—her father died only three months ago. I wrote her then, but had no answer."

"Probably she didn't get your letter," the missus commented. "She'd have answered."

"Things are worse than ever now—for me," I said. "She has her own money; it's no longer a question of expectations."

Ochayso here came out with a tray—how did the fellow always know just when the missus wanted anything? It was a valuable sort of telepathy, better than a system of electric bells. The red-headed woman pushed a tall, slender glass with pale green contents over toward me. "Try that," she said. "It's made by a new recipe. Oh-cheese—it's a treasure. I used to have to mix my punch and cocktails myself; but he'd make a fortune with any bar. This is prime."

I thought she was going to say nothing more about Constance and my revelations; but she finally looked up from an unusually long silence and remarked: "Don't stick to it. Chuck it up. It'll take too long."

I looked at my glass in bewilderment, and she laughed. "The girl, I mean. Now, I've got a girl coming out here—well, in a few weeks—to stay awhile with me. She was born in the purple, too, with an extravagant souvenir spoon in her mouth; so she's all right for your book."

"It isn't a question of finding somebody sufficiently aristocratic," I began stiffly. "I have never cared for anyone but Constance—it'll be the same if she marries someone else while I'm trying to get the money together to make me able to approach her with self-respect."

The red-headed woman received this with a shrug and a laugh. "My girl has lost her money, bless her sweet heart," she explained. "She was a classmate of mine, and she has as little idea what to do to earn her right to existence as ever a poor baby had. She's all filled up with ideas about the West being a place where a woman can enter trades or professions like a man. I thought I'd get her out here and marry her off, because I'm really fond of her, and there's nothing else to be done with her."

I had never before heard the red-headed woman express so much interest in any human being. If she hadn't just treated my romance cavalierly, I should have felt mighty kindly toward her just at that moment.

"You'll think better of this other thing; you'll be interested when you see her," she said, as she rose and stood looking down at me. When I made a movement to rise, too, she put a hand on my shoulder.

"No, don't get up," she said softly. "I'm going in. You're a right nice boy—if you were born in the purple. I wonder where the colonel is?" And she left me to my cigar in peace—a peace which I had not known for weeks, since I seemed somehow to have come to a decent understanding with the red-headed woman.

It might have been a week later that, riding home from a round-up, the colonel spoke to me of his wife's senseless and alarming extravagance,

which, I could see, often strained even his exaggerated Western code of masculine generosity to the bursting point.

The colonel looked down at his bridle hand, and began, in a hurt, embarrassed tone: "You needn't be scared, Art, when you see the missus passing out the cash as she does. I won't let your share be imperiled."

I told him warmly that I was sure of it, and that I had never been worried about the matter. And the poor, beset, lonely old fellow went on:

"I married late in life. I'd seen the way these men out here do—any one of 'em will ask a woman to come and live in a shack and work like a dog, to help and please him—because he's lonesome and needs a wife in his business. And I said that, by the Lord, I'd never do that. I waited till I thought my pile was enough—I guess it is—but I want you to understand that if the missus runs her share of the shack in such a way that I think your interests are in danger, I'll give the word. I can't do it for myself but I will then."

My heart bled for the dear old man; but my conviction that he ought for his own sake to speak out—and that plainly and to some purpose—on this matter of her lavish wastefulness was so strong that I merely said: "Oh, yes, I know you'll protect my property," and let it go at that.

VII

WAR

I HAD been at El Nido ranch for a little more than a year. Taking the good with the bad, I liked the life. Colonel Bowie and I were prospering in a way to make Wall Street look slow.

We had bought—or, rather, he had bought, with my money and his experience—the uncounted remnants of three once prosperous brands, where wildly managed companies had gone broke—a mighty easy thing to do any time in the cattle business—and these remnants had panned out three and

four times the numbers guessed at and paid for. Then beef began a steady march upward that fairly made me dizzy; but the old boy held on cool and firm.

"I'll make your fortune, Art," he protested, when I would have shipped freely. "You watch me. I know this Western beef market. It doesn't break all in a minute like a grain market; it takes it about as long to go down as it did to go up; and we're safe to sell somewhere near the top."

It would be idle to deny that a great part of my comfort during this year had come from Mrs. Bowie. Domestic cataclysms, under her theatric touch, assumed a spectacular, wellnigh a burlesque, aspect, and I forgave her some things for the sake of others.

Early in the second year of my stay at the ranch I had been out on some distant ranges, and away for a week with the round-up, when I came in one evening, to find big Ellen delivering a lecture in the front hallway, with the red-headed woman as sole auditor.

Irish Ellen was not only a fine cook, but she was a good deal of a woman. She had not been brought up on the lower Bowery, and after this cooked for a man's club for ten years, without seeing much of the shady side of life. But a certain womanliness, a motherly quality, lived unspoiled in her, and always would. She stood now, under the glow of the wax lights, hands truculently on hips, her broad face red with rage, and poured out a flood of vituperation, oddly mingled with Bowery slang and the more elegant maledictions she had learned in her ten years' service at the club. "Ah-h-h-h! Oi'll shpake me mind now, before Oi go!"

"Yes, do," urged the red-headed woman. She was dressed for dinner, in a long, slippery-looking green frock. The sinuous snakiness of her, as she hung poised on one foot, and regarded her cook with frank, simple curiosity and interest, contrasted oddly with the bulk and solidity of the big Irishwoman. "Go on, do," she prompted.

Welcomed thus warmly, Ellen, who

had undoubtedly been haranguing for some time, plainly began to find she had exhausted her subject and herself. Her vocabulary had been laid out, used up; her speech began to lurch, and go with little lapses, like a machine that is running down. She looked, half shamefacedly, at her mistress; she felt sadly that the anger was dying out of her, and leaving her with that inevitable conclusion which each opponent of Mrs. Bowie's wound up with—that she was a fool.

"D'ye think I'd have stayed here one wake 'f it hadn't been for the kurrnel?" she vociferated. "'Tis a man to be proud of—and you a-drivin' him to drink and the divil as fast as you kin."

I attempted to retreat, but the red-headed woman caught sight of me and arrested my flight. "Hold on, Mr. Bolton," she remonstrated, as though we had been at a dog fight; "I think she'll say some more. She was awfully amusing awhile ago."

"Ah-h-h! ye red-headed, green-eyed, whey-faced—whey-faced—uh—uh—crayther!" big Ellen exploded, in her efforts to get up steam. "'Tis a divil-woman ye are, sich as come out o' the bogs in the old counthry. Ef a man would saw ye through the heart, he'd find ye holler inside—holler—holler—holler!"

Mrs. Bowie stole a step nearer, her hands behind her, a cigarette drooping from one corner of her lips, her eyes narrowed in intense enjoyment. Ellen seemed to have run finally down with that last "holler."

"Is that all?" the red-headed woman inquired silkily, but with real curiosity. "Ellen, you've no idea how funny you look. You're all puffed up, you know. But I thought you'd do a lot more than that," with an air of disappointment. "There are loads of funny new words in what you said. Go on—do—finish up."

Her little fair face, as naïve and direct as an urchin's, was all alight with anticipation. Big Ellen threw her check apron over her head and wept. She called aloud upon the Virgin Mary and a generous selection

of the saints. She fumbled wildly at her neck for a saint's relic, as I suppose, or perhaps she felt a smothering sensation—I know I did.

"Don't be a fool," said the red-headed woman coolly. "If you're not going to perform any more, go back into the kitchen and finish getting your dinner. I never had any idea you could be so amusing."

The meal went off as usual, except that the colonel was not present; and yet I knew he was in the house.

"Colonel Bowie not well?" I inquired cautiously.

"He's lying down," returned his wife, with an odd glint in her eyes. Ochayso, standing behind her chair, lost a little of his impassiveness; and I wondered if the colonel was turning the tables on his wife, and leaving *her*, this time. But no; as I passed his shut door, in going to my own quarters, I heard his heavy foot traveling the length of the room; and so it traveled till I fell asleep.

I woke next morning with the chidden feeling of one who has over-slept. I had not been called; there was no sign that anyone besides myself was awake in the house. I rose, dressed and went downstairs, with the sense still strong upon me that something had happened or was about to happen. I recollected that this was the day upon which Mrs. Bowie expected her friend from the East. Finding no one in any of the rooms, I finally brought up in the kitchen, where big Ellen was preparing a tardy breakfast.

"Oh, 'tis you, is it?" she inquired, tossing her head.

"It certainly is I, Ellen," I returned pacifically, "and I'm very glad to find that this is you. Are we liable to have some breakfast? Is everybody dead? Where's Ochayso?"

"You may ask that!" snorted big Ellen, still plainly in a hostile humor. "I never did hold with them snaky high-binder chinks, nohow."

I didn't pause to explain to Ellen the difference between a Chinaman and a Japanese noble, who was grad-

uated from an American university. "If you could indicate which direction he took," I said, "I'd like to talk some conversation to him."

"Huh!" snorted the cook. "The chink's too good to wait on the likes o' me; he's hidin' out till that—that—" perhaps I had better spare the reader Ellen's characterization—"till the missus gits back."

"Oh! Is she gone, then?" I asked. Twice before during my residence under her roof Mrs. Bowie had, like the lady in the ballad, forsaken her house and home and her own true lord. She appeared to make these excursions when desperately hard up for amusement. The reconciliations, the dramatic scenes, when she was coaxed back, were as abominable to me, and as wearing on the colonel, as her disappearances.

"Oh, is she gone, then?" mimicked big Ellen, turning on me with a furious sneer. "Yis, she is gone—and a good riddance o' bad rubbish, says I, if only the pore ole kurrnel wouldn't lave her come back."

I thought of the young lady from the East, who was expected on the train that day. "Oh, but she must come!" I ejaculated. "She must come back right away!"

"Ye measly, upstart beggar!" the big Irishwoman shouted, flourishing her mixing spoon. "I tuck ye for a gintleman; and here ye're no betther than the rist, a-whinin' afther that—"

"Hold on, Ellen!" I interposed. "I don't love the missus any better than you do—the Lord knows she's dragged me through hell—but this lady who's coming here today—there's got to be a woman in the house."

"A loidy!" exclaimed big Ellen, dropping her spoon with a clatter. "I clane forgot! I ax your parding, sorr; but that wummun—that wummun—" she was fairly whimpering now. "'Tis I have cooked for thim divils of min at the club for tin years, and never saw I real wickedness till this day. They'd come into my kitchen—the feller 'at was runnin' it some partic'lar week—an' cuss me out; an' I'd give 'em as

good as they sent, or betther. But oh, Holy Mother, this thing! What'll we do, sorr?" And she plainly looked to me for further orders.

"We must see what the colonel says," I began.

"Pore ole soul!" Ellen commented, with tears in her honest eyes. "'Tis Lightfoot and me have been poundin' on his door sence six o'clock—whin that jade rid off up to Simmonds's—and not a word can we git out o' him."

"Maybe he isn't there," I suggested.

"I'm thinkin' he is, sorr. I sent Lightfoot to the corral to see was any horses gone; and there's not, bar the missus's pony."

"I'll go up at once," I said. "We haven't much time to spare."

"Colonel! Colonel Bowie!" I cried, thumping on his door.

Lightfoot and Ellen had both tried and received no answer. Ochayso was nowhere to be found. I felt that something must be done. "Colonel!" I cried again, "has Mrs. Bowie gone over to the station to meet the young lady?"

It was a chance shot, but it opened the door. The colonel stood before me, disheveled and half clad. "Did you say Mrs. Bowie was gone somewhere?" he inquired, cautiously holding the door. "I've been asleep."

That was so likely, with all the bumping and thundering that we'd been doing! I passed over this statement. "Mrs. Bowie rode off up the cañon toward Simmonds's place two hours ago, Ellen tells me," I said. I omitted all the details as to the previous row with Mrs. Bowie, with which big Ellen had been so liberal. "Is it likely that she will go around by way of the station and bring home that young lady?"

"By George, that young lady!" exclaimed the colonel. "Say, come in here, Art; I'm going to talk to you while I dress. Things have come to a show-down between Mrs. Bowie and me. There's no use mincing matters; you've known all about it the other times when she's left me, and I have gone and coaxed her back. It's what I'll never do again."

It isn't just the thing to tell a man

that if he had the brutality to give his wife a civil beating, she would probably behave herself; so I only said: "That's right, colonel; you'll do a great deal better to wait till she comes back of her own accord. I always thought so."

The colonel swore. "You haven't any idea of the kind of a row we've had, nor the state that things are in," he said. I began to have something like an idea, I thought, as I took in the wildly disordered room, which looked as though a maniac had been turned loose in it—and the colonel always such a tidy, orderly soul! "That's just what I will not do—wait till she comes back. I'll never, willingly, look on her face again. When that girl came to me in San Francisco and talked about how unhappy she was at home and made love to me, as you know she can"—it is but just to remark here that the colonel had no idea of the revelations he was making in his rage—"she had me melted to a lump of putty. I wanted a wife and family; a man begins to need 'em when he gets along to my age; and she pretended to be offering me that!"

Of course I looked in wonder at the man who could have expected such things from such a woman—the other fellow always does. "I guess you'll have to see Mrs. Bowie again, colonel," I suggested, "if it's only to make the arrangements about the separation and all."

"So help me God, I never will!" said the colonel solemnly. "The separation—that's easy. She can take what I've got with you. I'll put in my pocket enough to give me a start. There are no children to be considered, thank heaven! I've been regarding that as a hardship—a calamity; but when she talked as she did about it to me this morning, I—well—I had hard work to keep my hands off her. I tell you, I was murderous. A moment more and I'd have struck her. Think of that, Art! I was as weak as a child and shaking all over when she got herself out of my sight. I'll pack my duds now and drive over to So-

corro and take the train for San Francisco. I depend on you to look after things here."

The mention of a train brought that unfortunate visiting young lady to my mind.

"Colonel," I interrupted him, with a hand on his arm as he dragged open a chiffonier drawer and scooped out its contents, "colonel, that girl who was coming to visit Mrs. Bowie, you know—she'll be on the south-bound and she's due in less than an hour. Is there anybody to meet her?"

"Hang the girl!" snorted the colonel. "She can go back where she came from."

"Colonel," I made a last effort, "you know Socorro. This is a lady, and an Eastern girl. If you won't send anyone for her, I'll go myself."

Then the colonel came out of mere wrathful trumpeting, and detained me. "See here, Art, this is no place for a stranger to come. I'll be leaving as soon as I get my trunk packed and attend to one or two little matters about the ranch. Mrs. Bowie may not be back here at all, and if she is she'll make a scene. You're liable to be left here alone with the servants. This is no place to bring a young lady."

I agreed perfectly with what the colonel said. Mrs. Bowie might leave the ranch in the cañon and go directly to Albuquerque or Chicago, when she found that the colonel didn't come begging after her.

"You just go over to the station—drive like the mischief, or you won't be in time—and talk to that young woman while the engine takes water. Put up whatever story you want to; but get her to go on past—on to El Paso—when the train goes—see?"

I saw. The colonel was right. The house, as things now stood, was hardly the place to bring a young lady. "She may be short of funds; Mrs. Bowie said something about her coming out here to earn a living." I was searching through my pockets to see what I might have on me.

The colonel picked up his trousers from a chair, and drew a roll of bills

from his waistband watch-pocket. "Say, here, buy her off, Art," he urged, proffering the whole amount. "Give her what's needful, and get her out of the way."

I noticed then, for the first time, that the colonel had been drinking. I had wondered often before, when I saw the torments through which the red-headed woman put him, that he did not drink. I dreaded now to leave him to his own devices.

I looked back once, and saw him scooping things out of bureau drawers and tossing them into a small trunk which Lightfoot had been directed to bring for him. Somehow he looked pathetic, in his pajamas, with his uncombed gray curls matted down upon his forehead by the sweat of his exertions.

Then I remembered that poor girl at the station, realized that I had scarcely time enough to meet the train, and fairly ran from the house.

VIII

CONSTANCE

DURING that ten-mile drive I thought pretty seriously of what I should say to that girl.

I had the buckboard, and I should have wasted no qualms, but should have brought her back with me, sure that the red-headed woman would be installed mistress of the situation by the time I returned; but the colonel's attitude complicated matters. For the first time since I had known anything of their affairs the worm had turned—and he was still turning. In fact, Colonel Bowie was a regular old bo-constrictor of a worm, and when he went into the turning business I doubted even the missus's ability to handle him. The sight of his gray head bent over that open trunk, in the midst of that nightmare of a room, while Lightfoot pitched articles of wear at him, haunted me. More than all, I was daunted by the fact that he was drinking.

The colonel had said to me when I

first came West: "You'll be all right, Art, if you don't get to crooking your elbow too much," this being apparently vernacular for what the East would call "lushing." "I know all about that business," he went on, "because I've been through it all. When I was a young man I took my plunge, and I took it sharp and sudden. I drank myself out of house and home and coat and boots in about six months. Then I was up against it; the question was whether Bill Bowie was going to be a sweater, drift along from one ranch to another, or whether he was going to pull up on the drinking and make a man of himself. I did the latter. I didn't touch a drop for five years, and I prospered because other men took too many. Now I keep the liquor in its place. I can take it when I need it, and let it alone when I don't; but if I ever go to pieces, I'll bet you this ranch against a blind monkey that I travel by the drink trail. If I should lose my grip and go to drinking tomorrow, I could drink up what I've made far quicker than I made it."

It presented itself to my mind, again and again, that the colonel, in despair, was determined to go on a wild debauch. Like a poor old Samson, he would pull the temple down on himself that it might destroy his tormentor, or at least end his torment.

The thought brought a lump into my throat; nobody who was associated with him could help loving the old colonel; he was so much of a man, such a good man in his own wild, woolly, Western fashion. But it could not be denied that the house was no place for a young lady from the East seeking a genteel method of maintenance.

I had just decided this for the fifteenth time when, as my buckboard swept in beside the little platform, I heard the shriek of the oncoming train. Fortunately, it had been nearly an hour late. I threw the reins into the bottom of the vehicle, jumped out and confronted the descending young lady herself—Constance Bleecker!

"Constance!" I cried, thrusting out both hands to take hers and looking over her shoulder for the young lady.

"You here, Arthur?" she answered me, putting her two little hands in those outstretched to receive them. "Oh, that's such a relief! I've been down in the depths for the last hour, and ready to turn back. It makes me over to see somebody from home."

During all this I had seen several men descend from the day coach, and a trunk had been put off. The sound of its impact on the platform brought me to my senses. "I must ask the conductor," I said; "I was expecting to meet a young lady—Mrs. Bowie—that is, Colonel——"

I stopped suddenly as the wheels began to grind, and ran toward the departing train. The Pullman conductor came out on the rear platform. He caught my last agonized shriek, "Another young lady!" and my very ears were red as he shouted back, "You're hard to satisfy—isn't one enough?"

I turned to meet Constance's laughing eyes as she said: "Colonel Bowie and Mrs. Bowie sent you over to meet a young lady—is that it, Arthur? And won't I do?"

Then it came to me with a sudden rush. I noted the black dress, the pale face, that had been so listless till I began my diverting gambols.

"But, my dear Constance," I mumbled, "we ought to have caught that train for you—indeed we ought. Colonel Bowie isn't—Mrs. Bowie isn't——"

I broke off and looked about me at Socorro—Socorro, the impossible—at the sand, the desert, the mountains, with the blue sky smiling above it all like an inverted bowl of sapphire. We two stood on the now deserted platform, with the little trunk beside us.

I saw absolutely no help from our surroundings. I must prepare my girl on the way over for what she had to expect, and trust to her own good sense to bring a happy issue from the embarrassing situation.

"It almost dazed me to find that it

was you—you!" I laughed, drawing a hypocritical hand across my brow. "Mrs. Bowie told me that she was expecting a young lady from the East, and I had—by George!" I paused thoughtfully, with a better opinion of the red-headed woman than I had ever entertained before.

"She didn't mention my name?" asked Constance, looking at me curiously, as she flecked the dust of travel from those garments which always looked better than the apparel of any other woman, no matter what their color or cut.

"No, she didn't mention your name," I echoed, as I swung the little trunk into place and lashed it with the rope. "And that was odd, because I had just been speaking of you. She must have intended to give me a surprise."

"Of course she did," agreed Constance, as I tucked the dust-robe about her knees and shook the ribbons out over my team. "That's just Lorelei; she's such an odd, original creature, but one of the best women in the world."

"You were classmates, I believe," I began cautiously. "How well do you know Mrs. Bowie, Constance?"

"I know that she was the only friend I had who offered me anything sensible in my time of trouble," Constance answered me warmly. "Half a dozen women would have been glad to take me into their households, and show me about as an article somewhat damaged, on the matrimonial bargain-counter. Lorelei was the only creature who suggested that I might earn a right to existence here in the West."

I listened with outward calm and inward tumult. The missus was in earnest, then, when she said that this friend of hers was penniless and eager to earn her way in the world. This meant so much to me, was so big a proposition, that I leaned back and adjusted it, watching my companion's delicate profile, beyond which the fluttering black veil set an uncertain background.

"Isn't this a lovely country?" she went on. "Lorelei talked to me about being dull and bored to death; but I'm

sure anyone could be happy here. The air is like wine. I believe I never breathed anything so stimulating. Don't you find it so?" turning to interrogate my silence.

"Yes, yes, Constance; it's all that. I like the country. I've cast in my lot here. I'm in partnership with Colonel Bowie, and I—well, I want to talk to you about that after awhile; but just now there is something I must explain to you about affairs over at the ranch house. Mrs. Bowie didn't send me for you—in fact, she isn't—she isn't at home."

Constance turned lovely eyes of astonishment upon me. "You're jesting," she asserted. And when I went on assuring her that I was not she commented, "How Western! They're more unconventional than we are—but I like it," with an invincible determination to be pleased with everything. "I remember that Lorelei was very—well, an innovator, at school." Here a little burst of laughter, cheering to me as a chime of silver bells, broke into her speech. "She did the oddest things, and yet she was always large-hearted and generous. Well, she has been called away, and she'll be back, I suppose. Are there any near neighbors, or any other women in the house?"

"There's big Ellen, the cook," I said desperately, "and our nearest neighbors are farther away than the station; besides, there are no women at their ranch now, I guess."

Her lip trembled a bit, but she set it and began once more courageously: "Colonel Bowie is older than Lorelei—almost an old gentleman, isn't he?"

I was like an unfortunate commissioned to break a bereavement to one whom he loved. In my hurry to have her sufferings over I blurted out:

"Colonel and Mrs. Bowie have just had a tremendous row. She's got on her pony and gone up to Simmonds's—that's an empty ranch house in the cañon back of us, where she goes and camps when she wants to freeze him out and make him come to time. The colonel's not going to come to time this trip. I left him packing his trunk;

and he's going to catch the next train toward San Francisco."

Then my girl did the sweetest thing that could be imagined. "Poor man!" she said softly. "And poor Lorelei, too! I can imagine that she—that she might be a little difficult. Maybe I can help some. Of course, you will see to it, Arthur, that I get the next train for——"

Her dear voice shook and broke. She pulled the black veil about her face. "Arthur," she whispered, in tones that strove to be free from sobs, "I haven't money enough to go back. Besides, I'll have to think whom I could go to."

"Don't, dearest," I remonstrated. "I know it's wretchedly bad form and seems almost caddish in this sort of a situation; but if you see Mrs. Bowie, she'll tell you what I told her—that I came out here to make money enough that I might not feel like a fortune-hunter in addressing your father's daughter."

Constance sat upright, and a handkerchief traveled under the black veil. "There," I said, "now I've made a beautiful mess of it! But I don't want you to feel that what I've said constitutes any claim on you. I only want you to understand that you've been my ambition and hope for years, and that it's my greatest happiness to look after you now."

"Yes," she said softly, and pushed back the veil. And I was astonished, and a bit set back, to find her face quite composed and her eyes dry. "We'll not talk about it, as you say, Arthur. This immediate tangle has to be straightened out now." And the last sentence brought us within a short distance of the ranch.

"Lorelei was a creature of many talents," said Constance. "What a beautiful home she has!"

"Isn't it?" I agreed. "Yes, she has a great deal of ability. I've lived a year now in her house, and nobody knows that better than I. Why, Constance, there isn't a ranch house in this State that can compare with that," and I pointed with my whip to where

the sun was making glorious the yellow Mexican poppies and the great white bells of yucca upon the red-headed woman's terrace edge.

"And yet you say that as though you didn't like her," Constance commented wistfully.

Like her! There was such a world to be said between that and the feeling I really did entertain for the red-headed woman that I drew a long breath and let it all go.

"When other women on ranches," I continued, "say they can't find servants at all Mrs. Bowie gets the best, and always gets them. She has no end of executive ability. If she must, she takes the most unpromising material and evolves perfect results—I don't know how, unless it's by simply demanding them. She's like a cat, determined to have comfort wherever she is; and her idea of comfort is magnificence. Oh, we've lived like princes and potentates in that house. In the year that I've been here she's flown up and left the colonel three times that I know of; and he and I were like a pair of warm cosseted things, upon whom a cold blast was let in just as soon as she was gone."

"And yet you think he won't—" Constance was beginning, when I raised my hand for silence.

"Excuse me," I said; "listen to that."

We were near the house now, and a babel of confused noises came out to greet us. Constance looked frightened; but I distinguished the colonel's voice, and surmised that it was no worse than the continuance of his packing—with Lightfoot's assistance. Then I heard a bumping and thumping, and was sure that the trunks were being hurled down the missus's carefully polished, hardwood stairs.

IX

FLIGHT

LEAVING Constance on the terrace, I ran up the steps to reconnoiter. For

it came sharply back to me that the colonel was drinking when I left, that he was a man in a desperate frame of mind, the household an utterly demoralized one. It would certainly be awkward to come home bringing to such a man and such a household a young lady—and a young lady whom I had been sent expressly to forestall and prevent from reaching the ranch.

I found the colonel, and drew a sigh of relief when I saw that he was now dressed and looked much as usual. I began at once, wading boldly in:

"She's come, colonel. Shall I bring her——?"

He glared at me in seeming amazement, then turned and started up the stairs. At the first landing he faced me, exclaiming vehemently:

"I won't see her! I depended on you, Art, to keep her from knowing that I was leaving here. Lock the door—lock the door, Art! And hide those trunks! Thunder and lightning! why don't you throw a rug over them? If she sees that I'm leaving—really leaving——"

Light broke upon me. "Oh, it isn't Mrs. Bowie," I explained. "It's the young lady you sent me over to the station for—Miss Bleecker. I—we——"

"Why, Art—Art!" remonstrated the colonel. "I thought you were going to tell that young woman how things were over here, and get her to go on. This is no place for young ladies from the East—no, by gad, nor from any other point of the compass!"

I could not gainsay him. "I—we—that is, the train got away before I could stop it," I floundered.

"Very curious," commented the colonel a little drily. "It stopped long enough to put off this female, and not long enough for you to tell her to remain on the train—very curious." But he came back down the stairs.

I was relieved and pleased at the meeting between Constance and her host. With her seemed to come a saner atmosphere. "Mr. Bolton tells me you are leaving on the north-bound!" she said in a quiet, practical

tone. "And he also says that Mrs. Bowie has been called away, suddenly, too. Unless your wife gets back before time for my train, I'm going on tomorrow. Mr. Bolton has promised to arrange it for me."

The colonel looked at her from under drawn, bushy brows. I could see that he was trying to guess just what I had told the girl. But there was no one who could resist Constance. "Ellen," he called to the big Irishwoman who was lurking in the back of the hall, "show this young lady up to the room Mrs. Bowie had prepared for her—I guess you know which one it is—and then let me have one of your good lunches for a farewell."

Ellen was wiping her eyes as she took Constance's bag and preceded her up the stairway.

"God forgive that wummun," I heard her mutter. "The best man that ever lived, and her to trate him as she do." And I seriously feared that Constance would fare ill at the Irishwoman's hands if she conceived the newcomer to be a friend of the absent missus.

We missed Ochayso in the dining-room; and yet the meal went fairly well, Ellen doing her own serving.

The big Irishwoman's ideals had been sadly warped in her fifty years; I saw she was bent upon plying the colonel with what appealed to her as the most direct and practical consolation. She never left his glass unfilled for an instant; and as the meal progressed, while I could not have said that the man was drunk, he was, between excitement, misery and the potations, quite out of himself.

"You knew Mrs. Bowie at college?" he observed, civilly addressing Constance.

"Yes, we were classmates; and when I was thrown entirely on my own resources, your wife was so kind as to suggest that the place for me was the West, where women are scarce, and—" I don't know what she would have added, for at that moment big Ellen shouted at the door the bare, soul-shaking announcement, "She's comin'!"

"Where?" ejaculated the colonel, and his flushed face turned white. "I must get away—I—" the red flamed back over his tanned cheeks—"I can't trust myself!"

"Up the trail, about a mile—I had Lightfoot a-luckin', an' he come a-runnin'."

"The trunks!" cried my partner. "We must get them out of sight."

I ran to the trunks. They were as heavy as if they had been filled with pig-iron—I think Lightfoot and the colonel must have packed them with mallets. "I've got to have help," I said, as soon as I laid hold of one handle.

The colonel rushed to my assistance. We were halfway across the hall with the largest box, when the big Irishwoman howled excitedly—she was growing hysterical: "Lave them—lave them, and run! That wummun will come and ketch you!" To me, apart, she added, "I tell ye, Misther Bolton, there'll be murther done if thim two comes together—I niver see the kurrnel as he is this toime—niver!"

The colonel released his end of the box very suddenly. It descended with a crash, barely missing my toe.

Constance had gone quietly to the front door. "Now, do you want to move the trunk out of the hall before Mrs. Bowie comes?" she asked. "There's nobody in sight. Go on; move the trunks. You have time."

It was plain she considered us a parcel of lunatics; yet her quiet, cheerful words did much to calm things, except in the case of Ellen, who, I verily believe, suspected her of being in league with the missus.

The powerful Irishwoman had laid hold of the trunk-handle from which she shoved the colonel, and was almost lifting the box, with half-manicacal strength.

"It's a disgoose that ye need, kurrnel!" she shouted. "Take my big cloak that hangs over the chair at the head of the stairs, an' disgoose yourself. I'll kape out of the way, an' the missus'll think 'tis me if she sees you a-runnin'."

The words sounded wild enough; I could see that Constance thought so; yet if the colonel wanted to leave the house without having a scene with his wife—and we meant to help him—there was sound wisdom in big Ellen's plan. Besides his aversion to the wrangle itself, his dread and distrust of his own fearfully aroused temper, I well guessed what it was he apprehended. I knew that the poor fellow was putty in the slim hands of the red-headed woman, and that he realized it but too well. His one chance of making this indeed their last quarrel was to flee before she got her eyes on him.

I feared Ellen would do herself an injury. I laid hold of the trunk with a will, and we soon had it pitched off the back porch, and concealed in some bushes. As we came up the steps, we met the colonel carrying the smaller trunk alone, and Constance's clear voice from the door announced, "I see a lady on horseback; I think it must be Mrs. Bowie."

The colonel dropped the small trunk as he had dropped his end of the larger one. Ellen and I stopped a moment to conceal it.

"Where's Lightfoot?" I asked indignantly. "Why isn't he here to help us?"

"He's gone down to the corral to saddle up a horse for the kurrnel," Ellen whispered hoarsely, as we hurried back into the hall, and noted the colonel's vanishing heels above, going, perhaps, toward the "disgoose" which Ellen had recommended.

Big Ellen collapsed and dropped suddenly back, with a guttural "Ugh!" as though someone had got in a centre shot at her with a brickbat. A moment after I saw the reason, as a light footfall came up the steps and across the gallery, and Constance was enveloped in an extremely comprehensive embrace.

"You dear thing," I heard the red-headed woman purr. "How on earth did you get here? I just remembered about you—sulking up the cañon, by myself—and I ran Five-Spot all the way home."

She pushed Constance off, and looked her over at arm's length. "Well, it's good to see you! Is that the way they wear them in New York? I saw it in the fashion papers, but you never can go by those fool things. Say, it becomes you vastly—I wonder how it would look on me?"

"I came over with Mr. Bolton," Constance interrupted her. "He remembered me, if you did forget."

"Oh, yes—where is he?" returned the missus, with animation.

Constance drew her into the hall, and toward the archway which led to the parlors. "What did you think when you saw who it was?" the red-headed woman asked, looking at me and smiling.

"I thought it was possible to underestimate some people," I returned, "in spite of the temptation to overestimate them."

"That's right neatly put," said the red-headed woman. "Don't you find him improved, Constance? He's been to school to me now for more than a year, and I flatter myself I've taught him several things."

Constance was heading us straight for the library, which lay back of the parlors. Suddenly the missus called a halt.

"Mr. Bolton will excuse us. He knows I've just got in. Come on upstairs, Connie, dearest; I want to empty at least three of the 'seven baskets full of talk,' before I can settle down a bit. And they really are wearing them that way in the East? Well, well!"

Something fell with a heavy slam on the floor upstairs. I wondered if big Ellen had forgotten to unlock the back stairway. If she had, a man of the colonel's physique, and in his excited, wrought-up state of mind, would not hesitate, I was sure, to swing himself down over the balcony. And if he got the big cloak and then did this, what would the red-headed woman think when she saw what appeared to be her portly Irish cook cutting such capers as this? Anxious as I really felt, I think I smiled as the absurd idea crossed my mind.

The commotion upstairs was renewed. "Lorelei," said Constance decidedly, "I insist upon your sitting right down here and waiting a moment. I—I've something I want to show you; I won't be a minute getting it from— from my trunk. Mr. Bolton will entertain you."

She cast me one expressive glance, and was gone. I sat gasping like a fish as her skirts swept up the stair. The red-headed woman laughed at my blank countenance, and that relieved the tension of the situation.

"Got a cigarette about you?" she asked nonchalantly, making herself comfortable upon a divan. "Well, is this Constance your Constance?—the one imperial and unapproachable she?"

This gave me a cue; I set to work to tell the red-headed woman how much I thanked her for bringing the girl I loved into my life once more. I heard a strange sound of stamping, shuffling feet above-stairs that sent wild surmises flying through my mind. But Constance had given me my orders. Talk I must. Heaven knows what nonsense I uttered in that wretched ten minutes. My tongue raced like a mill-wheel, till the red-headed woman pulled me up with the sudden query:

"Say, how many have you had? It's pretty early in the day for this sort of thing, isn't it?"

I laughed foolishly, and got to my feet. Would Constance never come?

As if in answer to my wish, I heard her voice, low, very earnest, "No—no! You mustn't!"

The red-headed woman heard too. She sat up and listened intently; but, not having my clue to the situation, she distrusted her own ears. "What did she say?" she asked, looking at me. "It was Connie's voice, wasn't it?"

"I think it was Ellen," I replied mendaciously. "Ellen's been behaving in a very peculiar manner." (So much was exactly true.)

"Like last night, do you mean?" Mrs. Bowie asked. "Or has she been having rows with Lightfoot, too?"

"You sit still," I said. "I'll step into the hall and see what it is."

I stepped into the hall. The colonel had missed big Ellen's cloak, that vast "circular" which would have been a reasonable disguise for his bulk and height. He had caught up, instead, one of the missus's kimonos. One guessed that he was past seeing or caring for such details. Its gay silken folds were swathed around his tweeds. Long, pale blue ribbons dangled from every possible point. A couple of bunches of velvet violets bobbed, one on each side of his grizzled gray mustache. Oh, he was a figure of fun to set anybody screaming. Yet Constance's face, over his shoulder, was strained, white, almost tragic.

"Wait, take off this thing," and she pulled at the kimono edge. "I'll go with you—I'll help you. We can get out quietly if that curtain is drawn," she whispered. Then, turning to me, "Arthur, go back into that room—and keep Mrs. Bowie there!"

I went—like a shot. I didn't know what Constance had encountered above-stairs to stir her so; but I myself had seen that the colonel was a desperate man, and I trusted her usual sound, cool, common sense enough to be sure that she felt she was pursuing the only feasible plan.

I stepped back into the room, drew the heavy portière, which was made from a Navajo robe, and was almost as impervious to sound as a door. "There," I said, turning to the red-headed woman, "that'll shut out the glare—or the heat—or the cold."

The missus laughed lazily as I seated myself close before her and began to talk. I could see that she wavered between belief that I was several drinks ahead and the more charitable conclusion that Constance's coming had upset me.

Almost at the instant I seated myself I heard heavy steps down the stair—the colonel had broken away from Constance. As I formulated the thought he shot past the window.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the red-headed woman. "There goes—no, it

isn't—but it must be—it's Ellen, in my kimono—my blue one with the violets. Why, she must be crazy—or is she drinking? I never knew that she drank."

"I told you that she was behaving strangely," I commented, glad of the ready-made explanation, and only hoping that the real Ellen would not present herself to expose my falsehood, and that Constance would come soon.

I rose and strolled with apparent carelessness to the window. The colonel was just approaching the salt-house at a run. I was glad he turned in there and did not, as I feared he would, continue on to the corral; for the red-headed woman came and looked over my shoulder. She caught the flutter of the last ribbon as he gained the shelter of the salt-house.

"Well, if Ellen is doing stunts of this sort, who's to get me some dinner, I wonder?"

"Ochayso isn't here," I reminded her. "Nobody has seen him since last night."

"I know he isn't," returned the missus shortly. "He's gone for good. I'll have to get another dining-room boy. I wonder if I could hammer Lightfoot into waiting on the table?" She ruminated. "Don't you want the job?"

I laughed a foolish, nervous laugh. Little she knew of the changes going on in her own affairs. The time was past when it was within the range of possibilities for that red-headed witch to get a white linen jacket on me, a napkin over my arm and a tray in my hand.

"Let's go and sit down," I suggested. "I've a lot of things—a lot of things—to tell you before Constance comes back. I—we—wasn't it funny that nobody would have been there to meet her if I hadn't suggested to the colonel—to the colonel——"

I floundered helplessly.

"By the way, where is the colonel?" inquired the missus sharply, sitting suddenly erect from the lolling posture into which she had just thrown herself.

The query, perfectly natural and

what I might have expected, utterly nonplussed me. It came at a trying moment. I had drifted back to the window and I saw Constance leading the colonel's snappish roan pony from the corral toward the salt-house. I bent forward with a smothered exclamation.

"What is it?" inquired the missus. "Has Ellen concluded to come back?"

"No," I replied. "There's nobody in sight. Oh, she mustn't! That bronco is liable to stamp her! She can't handle him. Excuse me, Mrs. Bowie; I'll be back in a moment."

"Ellen's able to take care of herself with anything that ever went on four legs," laughed the missus. "I'll go with you, and see if there are any shreds of my kimono left."

I admit that I was not born for intrigue. I am not a diplomatist; I am not even a fair, decent liar. Such must be my excuse for going utterly wild at this juncture and behaving like a forlorn idiot—as I did.

"Hold on—don't come to the window!" I cried. "I—it's—I was mistaken." And I turned and waved my hands at the red-headed woman in the manner of one "shooing" a hen. For I saw the colonel, just darting out of the salt-house door, taking his pony's bridle and preparing to mount; while, from her gestures, Constance evidently remonstrated that the frantic man yet retained the kimono.

Of course, my behavior aroused the missus's curiosity, and over she came, brushing my hands aside. "Why, it's Ellen—getting on a horse—with my kimono!" she cried. Then, "And Constance is with her! Oh, you liar!"

I felt the sting of a swift slap on my cheek; the red-headed woman had leaped through the window and was running like a deer toward the group at the salt-house.

There was nothing to do but jump through after her and follow. The colonel turned his head, saw us coming and set spurs to his pony. Constance, white and solicitous, held the sleeve of the kimono, which she was attempting to remove from him—and Constance's

grip is that of a good golf and tennis player and an expert horseback rider.

The thing ripped down the back like a locust when he pops out of his old shell. When we reached the salt-house there was a young woman standing there drawing her breath in long, shuddering sighs, holding in her hands some silk rags and tousled ribbon and looking tragically to where a cloud of dust down the trail marked the colonel's disappearance.

I had seen the red-headed woman angry many times; I knew what her quick fury was like. We both ran mechanically to where Constance stood, though there was nothing to be gained by that.

"You get me a fresh horse!" the mis-sus cried back over her shoulder. "This minute—do you hear? Oh, you're a pretty pair!" as we halted panting at the salt-house door.

"You're not going to follow him—you sha'n't!" gasped Constance.

"I sha'n't!" The red-headed woman brought out her inquiry in a sort of shout. "I'd like to know who dares say 'sha'n't' to me? That man is my husband, miss! Of all the performances! You get my horse!" she screamed again at me, so that I fairly jumped. I think I should have gone meekly and saddled up for the red-headed woman, but Constance laid an authoritative hand upon her arm.

"Hush, Lorelei!" she said. Her breath still came unevenly, and her face showed the stress of emotion. "When I went upstairs—when I left you there in the house——"

"I don't care what you did," the red-headed woman broke in. "Don't you see the colonel's getting away?" And over the woman's small, angry face came a look of acute distress, that struck me with amazement at the moment. "Get my horse, you staring jackass! Get my horse!"

"Yes, he's getting away," Constance said; and added a fervent "Thank God!"

Mrs. Bowie turned on her; but before she could utter one word, my

girl, facing her unflinchingly, went rapidly on:

"When I left you in the house there, Lorelei, I ran upstairs to help him. That's what I went for. I found him in your room, fumbling around in the top drawer of your chiffonier."

The red-headed woman's face went white as she listened. "Oh, no!" she whispered. "Not that—he wasn't——"

"Yes, he was," Constance said sharply. "He found what he was looking for, just as I got to the door—a pistol! I ran forward and tried to take it away from him. We struggled and fought for the thing all over that room. I got it, finally—but only because he was afraid that, in the scuffle, he would shoot me."

"And you weren't afraid of being shot?" I broke in. "Oh, Constance, you shouldn't have done that! You should have called me." This was the scuffling I had heard.

"I was—I was horribly afraid," my girl said; "but I couldn't let him do that. His hair was so gray—he's a dear old man; and you've driven him, you've harried him, Lorelei, till he doesn't care to live. But you sha'n't follow him—I say you sha'n't!" And she thrust her fair, fine, tender-tinted face close up to the red-headed woman's, almost threateningly. "He'll surely kill himself if you do."

Mrs. Bowie had stood with drawn, working features, rolling and unrolling the kimono ribbons about her fingers as the other spoke. I looked to see her slap Constance, as she had me, or burst out laughing, swearing—anything but what she did—weeping. She flung herself upon Constance, and clutched my girl's shoulders, hiding her face in her friend's breast.

"Oh—oh—oh! You make me out a devil! You think—and he—the colonel—oh, I can't bear it! I won't bear it! I wish I were dead!" she sobbed.

"No, you don't," said Constance sternly. "You don't wish you were dead, as that poor man did—or you'd be dead."

But Mrs. Bowie's sobs grew more

terrific; the spasmodic movements of her muscles showed that her nerves were getting to be less and less under her control.

"Come, come," I said. "We must get her back to the house. This will never do."

Just then I saw big Ellen striding across the lawn toward us. It grows trite for a man to assert that one never knows what to expect from the eternal feminine. However, Ellen was so nearly a man in her strength and stature that one might be pardoned for supposing he could guess within a mile or so of where she would bob up. Yet I believe I said that there was a womanly quality in her which survived her harsh training. She proved herself a very woman now.

"Lave her to me!" she cried, possessing herself of her mistress's shaking hands and preparing to half carry her to the house. "Ah-h-h! Ye poor gurrel! Don't I know how it aches in ye? Ye've played the divil—have ye? Well, then, it hurts *you* more nor it hurts anybody else."

And so, between coaxing and lifting and leading, she got her mistress back to her room, to her bed, and with Constance's help undressed her and laid her down.

X

PURSUIT

It was a tear-marred face that Constance brought out to me, waiting on the landing, hearing—with little enough patience—the moans of Mrs. Bowie and the soothing exclamations of the two women who worked over her.

"We've got her quieted at last," she said, wiping her eyes and closing the door softly. "Oh, Arthur, this has been a day of experiences!"

"And it's not yet five o'clock," I added, taking her hand as we went down the stairs together. "Don't worry about that woman back there. Her howling is all pure pose—nothing

but pose. She has no more heart than a wooden Indian!"

The tears started afresh in my love's eyes. "Don't!" she remonstrated. "I've just been listening to her, Arthur, and I really can't—" she choked.

I said no more; and Constance herself seemed willing to turn from the question of the red-headed woman's misdoings.

"The poor old colonel!" she murmured pityingly. "It was pathetic, and it was ludicrous. Part of the time I could almost have laughed; but I've only to shut my eyes to see his poor old gray head with that pistol-barrel shining against it. It seems Lorelei dreaded what he might do, and took his own pistols away with her. But he knew she always kept one in that drawer. That's what she—that's one of the things she told us in there, just now."

"Heartless hussy!" I commented. "You really must excuse me, Constance, but that woman has humiliated and dragged me through more torment than any creature I ever knew, simply because I had to serve as an audience for the colonel's training and her posing. That's why I tell you that her hypocritical tears now are all pose—pure pose, my dear."

My love looked at me in a sort of protest, but made no reply. Presently she spoke again of the colonel. "The poor old fellow would tell me how grateful he was—how good I was," she began. "He said he had lived a bachelor till he was almost fifty, and that the Lord abandoned him when he was fool enough to marry."

At dinner-time Constance informed me that her friend was sleeping at last, and that she had thought best not to disturb her. We spent a quiet evening together, warmed by a sense of our own personal happiness and well-being, amid the crash of the red-headed woman's affairs and the poor old colonel's.

Next morning Constance brought a very perplexed countenance to the breakfast-table, along with a brief and

characteristic communication from Mrs. Bowie, which she silently laid before me. The letter ran:

DEAR CON: I got restless in the night and got to thinking about my affairs. Big Ellen has helped me pack, and Lightfoot will take me over to Socorro before either you or Mr. Bolton are awake.

I don't want to be selfish, but I can hardly drag my mind off my own affairs, to think for a moment of yours. Just one thing, dearest—it's all nonsense, your trying to earn your living out here. You'd better marry. I hoped you would when I sent for you. Women of any kind are scarce in the West; but women like you are scarce anywhere. Don't worry about me. I'll catch up with the colonel, and we'll be back in a few days. I think Ellen will do for a chaperon; but if you feel she won't, let Mr. Bolton go over to the G-Bar-Q and stay while we're gone. Don't you go till I get back. Make yourself comfortable.

Lovingly,

L.

I read this communication with mingled feelings. Constance, across the table from me, watched with worried face till I had finished it.

"There's one sensible thing she says," I commented as I handed it back.

"And what's that?" asked Constance. "I didn't find any."

"It's about your not trying to earn a living—about your marrying me instead. That's what she meant, dearest. I've told her what my hopes were; and it encourages me to see that she thought you might care for me."

Constance rose, and I followed her to the gallery. It was a perfect morning; we stood together looking out over the beautiful slopes and draws and cañons of the colonel's ranch.

"What do you think about her finding the colonel, and coming back?" began Constance. "I want to talk about our immediate arrangements."

I considered a moment, then answered: "I don't believe the colonel will let himself be found. He was a desperate man. That's his way, it seems; he'll put up with anything and everything till he finally turns on it; but once he does turn on it, he's utterly done with it; nothing can move him. He wouldn't read a letter from that woman, nor treat with anyone who

he understood came from her—of that I'm sure."

"Oh, that would be dreadful!" cried my girl. "I don't see how she is to bear it if—if she fails utterly."

"She'd better have thought of that while she was driving him to desperation. It's taken her more than two years to wear out his patience. There was a time, in all conscience, for her to give a little thought to what she'd do if he ever did come to the end of it," I said.

Constance wrung her hands together. "Oh, but now, he must—he must listen to her."

I looked at my usually sensible sweetheart in amazement. "I don't see it that way at all," I returned a little drily.

"Of course you don't," returned Constance; "why should you? You don't know—you don't understand—" A swift wave of crimson went over my girl's face. "He must listen to her," she concluded rather lamely, looking away from me.

"Well, I've known Mrs. Bowie only a year or so, and I'm but a poor masculine bat," I rejoined, with affected sarcasm, for I resented the pained sympathy that undeserving piece was wringing from my love's tender heart. "Very likely you could come here and see more in an hour than I found out in a year. My guess is that she'll give up the chase and be back at the ranch in a week."

Constance shook her head; the embarrassed flush still colored her brow and cheek. "Lorelei will not come back without her husband," she persisted.

"Well, then," I said, "neither of them will be back here for quite a spell—that's certain."

"What are we to do?" asked Constance blankly.

"Get married," I urged joyously. "Constance, love, I sha'n't mind a bit if you take me partly as a matter of convenience—I'll be sure of making you love me, later. I don't feel as if such a love as mine for you would ever go without its answer."

My girl's anxious face softened and changed beautifully. "Oh, I do!" she whispered. "I have for—for ever so long. Lorelei knew about it when we were at school together. That's why she sent for me. She has a kind heart, Arthur. I can't feel hard toward her."

"Nor can I," I agreed, as I took my girl in my arms. "I could forgive a heap worse people than the red-headed woman, just now—God bless her, wherever she is!"

XI

FINANCIAL

CONSTANCE and I had been married nearly two months before we got our first communication from Mrs. Bowie. We rode to Socorro that first day and the ceremony was quietly performed. I am sure we were happier than people who plan, who prepare and who waste their emotions on a fearful lot of frumpery at such times.

I expressed some commiseration for my girl that there were no new frocks, nor bridesmaids, nor any wedding tour. But she said she had been so surfeited with such things her life long that it was a relief to omit them all.

When we got back to the Bowie ranch big Ellen gave us warning. I knew she would; I knew nobody on earth but the red-headed woman could have held her so long away from New York.

"And Lightfoot?" I asked. "Does Lightfoot remain in my employ—or, rather, in Colonel Bowie's employ?"

"Where I go Lightfoot goes," returned the big Irishwoman. "That's accordin' to natur and the churrch. Many's the trouble Lightfoot and me has had beca'se I wouldn't quit and go back to New York a-takin' him. He'll trouble me no more when we're settled in a rest'rant of our own on the Bowery."

"Oh, that's the plan, is it?" I asked; and my wonder at the red-headed woman grew, with this proof that big Ellen had remained with her not on account of Lightfoot, but in spite of him!

But to return to Mrs. Bowie's letter; it was brief and written upon the stationery of a cheap hotel in Pueblo; she wanted to sell the ranch—or, rather, Colonel Bowie's share in it—to me, and I was directed to answer her at Silver Cliff.

I was a good deal disgusted with the woman—the idea of her proposing to sell the old man out of house and home without consulting him nauseated me. I wrote her pretty briefly stating that she couldn't make a deed to the ranch without her husband's name, and that I was administering it as honestly and as capably as I knew how, with the assistance of an experienced cattleman who had acted as one of the colonel's ranch bosses.

She wrote me from Silver Cliff to ask if there was anything that I could let her have from the income of the ranch. That made me hot in the collar. The woman hadn't been gone two months, and I had reason to know that she carried a good deal of ready money with her when she left. Constance hung on to me, however, and reminded me that if the colonel were at home his wife would be able to get every cent that was due him as his share of the income.

"He said to me again and again that it was all for her," my wife assured me. "'I'll take a little that I have by me, and she's welcome to what's here,' he told me. 'It won't be the first time Bill Bowie's hit the trail with nothing but what he carried in his clothes'—those were his words. If you have any money that would be due now, I am sure he would want you to send it to her." And it was what I finally did.

That quieted the red-headed woman for a time; but there came another letter a month later from Salt Lake. She was at me again about the sale of the ranch.

"I've trailed the colonel all over the West pretty much," she wrote; "and it takes money; so I'm out again. I've got to have it—just got to—in order to get hold of him; and get hold of him I'm determined to do. What would my signature on a deed of the

ranches, houses, cattle, horses—the whole shebang—be worth to you? I'll locate the colonel right away—and then I'll see that he joins me in a deed. He will; you need have no fear but what he will do so."

"He will—yes, you bet he will, if ever she gets her claws on him, the poor old colonel—the jade!" I muttered, as I read this beautiful letter.

The income of a ranch is not steady, like an urban business. Your money comes in large sums and at long intervals. If beef's down—and stays down—you may not ship for a year at a lick; then you've got no income at all—just expenses. There was nothing coming to the red-headed woman now, probably for some months, unless she could sell the ranch to me.

I was shocked at the way she was getting rid of money, and I took the liberty of saying in my reply that the price of the ranch itself would not last her long at this rate. I named a small sum which I thought her signature might be worth; but I told her I did not care to buy in such fashion at any figure.

There was a long interval of silence; then she wrote me from San Francisco, ignoring the cutting tone of my former letter, stating that she had located the colonel and would have his signature on the deeds—what would I give for them?

Well, I believe I never hated a human being—who had done me no personal injury—more than I did the red-headed woman when I received this letter. Even Constance's sturdy optimism concerning her friend had to succumb before such overwhelming evidence of heartlessness.

We were very happy on the ranch, my wife and I; it was a beautiful home nest that the red-headed woman had provided for two really united hearts—an Eden deserted by its Eve. Constance professed to feel gratitude and sympathy for her, while she enjoyed the comforts and the artistic beauty of her home; but it was my habit to sneer and say that the red-headed woman was like any other cat which loved a warm nest.

I solved the servant question by bringing out two or three Swedish families, the men of which were not much use in the cattle industry, but the women made things right at home. It was a big opportunity to get such a ranch as the colonel's, all stocked and running well, with proved men employed upon it, and I made the price accordingly—though, as it was cash, I had to borrow in order to be generous.

Four weeks after the first San Francisco letter the deeds came. Constance wept over the colonel's signature. It was so shaky you could scarcely have identified it with the strong, bold, awkward lines of his handwriting as we knew it. We had a young doctor visiting us at the time, and I remember I passed the paper over to him. He whistled as he looked at it. "The man who wrote that won't live a year," he said, handing it back.

After that—silence. Contented year followed contented year, and we heard nothing of the Bowies. Constance was a born ranchwoman; the Western life agreed with her, developed her. She took on new beauty with increased health. Children came to relieve the loneliness of the life; and ten years passed by before either of us cared to go East.

We were returning from our first Eastern trip in a leisurely fashion, and had stopped in Denver for a stay of some weeks. "Why don't you go to a boarding-house?" my friend, the doctor, who was in practice there, asked of us. "You'll find it much more comfortable. There are several I could recommend. There's a Mrs. Bowie, who has a place up on Forest avenue. Really, you'll find it as well kept as a first-class hotel, and much more home-like."

"Bowie?" I echoed. "Are the initials W. G.?"

"Couldn't say," returned my friend; "but it's a place you'll like, I'm sure—everybody does."

"Has she red hair?" asked Constance.

"Sure!" returned the doctor. And then we all laughed. How naturally and easily a woman puts her finger on the

distinguishing mark which will not be missed!

"I wonder if her husband's living," Constance kept saying as we went up in the carriage.

"Of course not," I replied. "Don't you remember that Dr. Arnold thought he couldn't live a year when he looked at the signature to that deed? Besides, she wouldn't be keeping boarders if the colonel were living."

We drew up before the lawn of a handsome stone house. Nowhere do they have such emerald grass as in Denver, where the herbage of the field must be hand-watered. A cow-pony, with a rope coiled at the saddle-horn, was tied at the curb; a tall, white-haired man was coming down the walk. Two boys of about eight and ten rushed after him begging to "go along." A tall matron opened the door and called:

"Let Paul go, colonel. I need Bobby at home this afternoon."

It was the red-headed woman!

XII

HARBOR

WELL, I don't expect another such welcome in this world as I got when I helped Constance and the babies out of the carriage.

The colonel looked hale and handsome. His gray hair was white. I thought I could see where dissipation had told upon him; and yet it was evident that his dissipation must now be pretty far in the past; for his eyes were clear and bright, his carriage buoyant, and his strong white teeth flashed in frequent, almost boyish smiles. He was a man, the colonel; and I guessed, the moment I put my eyes on him, that he was the head of his household.

His wife's attitude toward him was just what you would have looked for from the red-headed woman—that is, it was, to me, an absolutely astonishing and unexpected manner. If this isn't one way of saying that no man

understands the heart feminine, I give it up. And Mrs. Bowie was all a woman; she had, to an exaggerated degree, all the faults we call feminine; and I was now to see that she added to them some feminine virtues.

After we'd talked—regularly shouted—till we'd attracted the attention of everybody on the block, she said:

"You go on, colonel"—the colonel was starting for his ranch—"we're beginning in the cattle business again, but we aren't far from town this time. Go on now, dear, and get back early, so that we can talk these people to death after dinner."

I turned to the colonel as Constance and her hostess walked on up toward the front door. I thought the suspicion of a wink had trembled upon his left eyelid when his wife said "we."

"I see you're doing well," I commented, glancing at the house, and then at the handsome equipment of the colonel's pony. "But you know the cattle business—you've got the hang of the thing—and would do well anywhere."

"I've got the hang of more things than one," assented the colonel, with sudden gravity, as he prepared to ride away. "You heard Mrs. Bowie say that we had gone into the cattle business? That's the whole secret, Art; we're full partners in everything. If she spends too much money, I just hoist her out of the water as I would have hoisted you—that's why she set up this fool boarding-house. She said she was going to have something she could boss. She pretends not to like being bossed—but you go in and see."

We were in time for luncheon, and we found the red-headed woman's house all that my friend had promised us. Her boarders were more like guests than any it has ever been my fortune to see, and her household administered in the same perfect fashion I knew so well of old.

"You're not going anywhere this afternoon?" the missus inquired, as she entered our sitting-room after luncheon was over. "I wanted the

colonel to go on, and I wanted you folks to stay at home, because I've got about forty things to talk over with you that I couldn't discuss before him. We'll have our jollification after dinner tonight, all right; but I want a real heart-to-heart confab with you two before my dear old man comes back."

Time and suffering had improved the red-headed woman. She had grown stouter. She seemed to have abandoned posing. Her clothing was buttoned on her as a human being's should be. I really thought her a likable sort of person, while Constance was enthusiastic.

"Who do you suppose I have in my kitchen?" she asked, turning to us with a sudden smile.

"Not big Ellen!" exclaimed my wife and I in one breath.

The red-headed woman nodded. "You guessed it first time," she laughed. "I found her here in Denver, stranded. Lightfoot had taken every cent she'd saved to buy that 'rest'rant on the Bowery' that she told you they were headed for, and had left her. It's my opinion that's all he ever wanted her to get her money together for, and start East. I don't know why she hadn't got a first-class place; but she was hipped, and down, and the gladdest creature to see me that you can imagine."

"So now that Lightfoot's out of the way, you'll have her with you indefinitely," I hazarded.

"Oh, he came back, as soon as he'd got rid of the last of the money," Mrs. Bowie replied cheerfully. "The colonel has him in hand now. He spends most of his time out at the ranch. Ellen and Lightfoot take pattern by the heads of the house; they've patched it up and are doing better."

"Lorelei," said Constance suddenly, "I believe you look younger and better than you did when—er—the last time I saw you. I thought, when we got your letters, that if I ever saw you again, you'd be quite broken down."

"Trouble's good for some people," I said, falling easily back into my old

habit of sledge-hammer frankness with the red-headed woman.

"I guess it is," she smiled. "They wouldn't hunt it if it wasn't. Lord, I left El Nido about as near crazy as ever a woman was! I knew one thing—and that was all I did know; I had to find the colonel and make it up with him."

"Pray don't understand me as criticizing your methods," I broke in, "but I'm still wondering how you got rid of as much money as you did, chasing after Colonel Bowie."

"Oh, I didn't spend it all on the chase," the red-headed woman answered. "I suppose you know that the colonel started out with a lot of securities and deeds in his possession. I guessed at what he was intending to do. I expected he'd go to drinking, and he'd already told me what kind of a drunkard he would make. I hunted up the barkeepers and gamblers in each of the towns I went through, to find whether he had cashed any of his securities with them. Sometimes I'd find that he had; and when these were decent fellows, I could redeem the securities for what he'd obtained. In other cases I threatened, and begged, and paid whatever I had to. You see, I thought when I caught up with the colonel he'd forgive me some things for the sake of others. I was beginning to see that I hadn't toted fair, and I wanted to come to him with something in my hand."

"He wouldn't stop anywhere to let you say one word to him?" Constance protested, a little resentfully.

"He wouldn't stop," echoed the red-headed woman, without any resentment. "The colonel's got a level head. How was he to know that I just wanted a chance to tell him that I was ready to quit my foolishness? Remember the bishop saying that what I needed was to be brayed in a mortar?"

I nodded.

"Well, I got it. I tell you, I was pounded down fine. I used to get my best help from the Salvation Army—they're right good folks. They know all about the dregs; they're clean down at the bottom of things in every town;

and I got so I'd go straight to headquarters as soon as I struck a new place.

"It troubled me a little at first that they took me for such a creature as they usually have to deal with. Lord! I don't know why I should have cared. I expect I did look pretty tough; and it never made a bit of difference with them—with their goodness to me, I mean. I think they were kinder than if they had believed me to be a respectable married woman hunting for my husband. I don't know what they thought the colonel was, or had done; but they would hustle and work to locate him for me as if it had been the one job in life with them. They always used to put up a little song and dance to me about getting converted and leaving off my evil ways, before they got done with me; but I reckon that didn't hurt me. I was converted all right; and I told them that if I ever found the colonel, I'd behave and be good for the rest of my days. That usually satisfied them. I think I was a little crazy part of the time, rushing from place to place that way, coming so near success, and just failing so often."

"I wish we'd known of your need," Constance said. "There was no necessity for you to go to those people. If you'd just written me, once, where you were and what you were doing, I'd have helped you."

The red-headed woman leaned forward and took my wife's hand between her own—a little flesh had improved the red-headed woman's hands wonderfully. "That's just what I couldn't do," she said. "I never knew, when I got into a town, how long I'd be there. I might stay three weeks, and I might not stay three hours; it was just according to what I found out. Every now and then I would be so close on the trail that I'd just take the train without going back to my hotel."

"The first place I did that I left my trunk, and the man sold it—for my bill, he said. It had about six hundred dollars' worth of stuff in it, and I didn't owe him six; but I couldn't help myself; and, after all, the trunk was of no

account to me, on such a chase as I was. I learned to travel with a little valise. A valise!—I came down to a brown-paper parcel."

But the red-headed woman's attitude toward her past and its sins was characteristic and instructive. Whoever expected to find her a penitent and in tears over her youthful follies would be disappointed. The recollection of the wildest of them evoked little more than a reminiscent giggle, till I spoke of Ochayso.

Then she got up and went to the window, affecting that one of the boys had called her.

"Ochayso," she echoed, speaking over her shoulder. I noticed that she did not call him by the old, contemptuous nickname. "Yes, oh, yes! I saw a good deal of him that first year in San Francisco."

She turned and came back, and I felt sure she was wiping her eyes, though she made a pretense that the glare of light at the window had hurt them.

"He was a good boy," she burst out suddenly. "I don't often talk about him, nor think about him. You know it's not my way to hang on to things that make me sad; but you knew him, and he deserves 'honorable mention.'" She sat drooping in her chair a moment.

"I don't know what I'd have done without Ochayso, that first six months." She shook her head. "He wanted to capitalize my search; but of course I couldn't have that; it was mean enough of me to take his devotion, his time, all the heart and energy that he ought to have been putting into something for himself, to patch up my mistake—I couldn't take his money. I sent to you and sold the ranch." There was silence for a moment; then our hostess went on:

"I guess I never told you how I picked up Ochayso. It was at a reception in Washington; he was the Marquis Hamida then, a bright young fellow just through Harvard, and considering the proposition of attaching himself to the Japanese legation."

I nodded. That was the name I had never been able to remember, though he had dropped the title temporarily and called himself plain Mr. Hamida at Harvard.

"He seemed rather attracted to me," the missus said; "and I gave him a little whirl—oh, you know—he was different from the other men, and novelty always attracts me."

Constance smiled indulgently; the best of women have a sneaking weakness for the absolutely heartless coquette. "You're a cat, Lorelei; you try your claws on men, just as a cat sharpens its weapons on logs and tree-bark."

The simile was apt. The red-headed woman laughed a little faintly. "If I ever did any harm in that way the Lord punished me for it," she said. "I wasn't conscious of casting any spells on the poor little Japanese marquis. I simply posed as an unappreciated genius, a woman with a deathless sorrow, and that sort of thing—Lord! I'd think the men would be used to that song and dance by this time; it's the one every good-for-nothing piece gets off when she wants to see a man make a fool of himself for her amusement. But somehow the little marquis took me seriously—that's a tragedy in itself. I wasn't cut out to be taken that way—I don't take myself seriously!"

One of the most amusing things about the red-headed woman was the way in which she could consider herself in such an utterly detached fashion.

"I told him, among other things, of the barbarous land into which I had followed the colonel, where not even the decent comforts of life, servants and that sort of thing, were to be had. 'You should get you a Japanese boy for the dining-room,' he suggested.

"I knew that a good many college students—Japanese, I mean—took such positions to learn the language, and I didn't think it strange when he informed me that he knew of a young countryman of his whom he could recommend, who would be devoted to me. I promptly told him to

send the boy along, gave him the address, and instructed him that we would be at home in three weeks.

"In three weeks he came—Ochayso—with a note from the Marquis Hamida. He walked over from Socorro. He was in a native rig, such as I suppose servants wear in his country, but I knew him at once.

"'This is absurd, marquis,' I said to him. 'It's impossible—unthinkable—and might become scandalous.'

"The little man looked so heartbroken, he protested so sadly that he was Ochayso, recommended only by the marquis; he took his wrists in his fingers in that handcuffing way Orientals always do when they want to make you believe they're in dead earnest; he almost wept."

"I can see him," I commented smilingly.

"Don't you laugh at him—he's a better man than you are!" flashed the red-headed woman; "the best man I ever knew."

"Except the colonel," I suggested. I've noticed that it is a way women have to lay immortelles at the shrine of the man about whom they never cared a fillip.

"No, *not* excepting the colonel. The colonel's *my* man; but he never would have stood for what poor Ochayso did."

I leaned back and looked at the missus a little cynically. Does a woman ever love a man who makes a door-mat of himself like that? The query rose in my mind, but was not put, for the red-headed woman went on:

"I had no idea he would stay a week. I set in to disgust him with the place and with myself—I honestly did. I tried to shock him; but he had his everlasting, world-without-end Oriental imagination filled up with the fiction that I was a suffering angel; and every perfectly outrageous performance of mine was laid to the colonel's charge. So he stayed with me till that—that day."

"And then he followed you," I said.

"I suppose he did," Mrs. Bowie assented; "but I never saw anything of him till I was in San Francisco. I had trailed the colonel from Denver west,

just missing him at every stop. You'd have wondered at me, both of you."

"No, we wouldn't," I said flippantly.

But Constance, with a truer instinct, drew her arm about her one-time friend's shoulders and murmured: "I always said you were one of the best women in the world." She hadn't always; but there—a woman will quote what she feels she ought to have said when the event is laid open before her. That is why she can declare afterward, "I told you so."

"Lord, yes, you would!" the red-headed woman reiterated. "I used to wonder at myself. I went through every saloon and every dive in those towns as systematically as a detective. At first I used to take a policeman with me; then I got to thinking how it would look—I, with a policeman, looking for a husband that I had driven to drink and desperation. I saved money by cutting loose from the police, and I ran more chance of finding the dear old boy. But my funds ebbed and ebbed, and I always just missed him."

"I wish we'd known it," Constance put in. "Why didn't you write to us?"

The red-headed woman laughed. "Pride, I reckon," she said; "though you wouldn't think I'd 'a' had much pride left after I'd trailed through every slum between Denver and the Golden Gate. I sold my shoes in Pasadena for railroad fare. You know I used to be fussy about my footwear, and I'd got rid of everything else of any value. I arrived at San Francisco in a pair of carpet-slippers that the police matron had lent me. I saw a man I thought was the colonel going through one of the gates in the station. I tried to follow him, and the gate officials stopped me."

She paused. I could see Constance's eyes swimming. The room was dead still.

"Well, I didn't have any ticket, and I guess I did look pretty tough; I'd been sitting up all night, because I couldn't afford a sleeping-car—and the carpet-slippers, and all—I guess I did look as though I had come out of the poorhouse or a lunatic asylum."

The red-headed woman's voice went on again: "When he turned me back—he had to be pretty forcible about it, mere moral suasion and standing in my way would not have stopped me—I broke down and cried."

"Poor girl—poor girl!" said Constance, patting the other's shoulder, and the tears were on her own cheeks now.

"I don't often do such a thing," she went on; "but when I do cut loose it's a freshet and a cyclone and an earthquake, all in one. 'Member, Con?"

Constance nodded.

"Well, then, I was sitting there, simply boo-hooing, and so mad that the tears almost sizzled as they hopped down my cheeks, when somebody said at my elbow, 'Madame, there is a carriage waiting for you. This way, please.'"

"Ochayso!"

"Ochayso," echoed the red-headed woman. "He took me to that carriage with all the solemnity in life; even the carpet-slippers made no impression upon his gravity. You might have supposed that the ladies in his land wore nothing else on their feet. Oh, he was heavenly good to me—and it was like heaven to have someone about me who cared whether I lived or died!"

I realized that here was "the day," of which Ochayso had spoken to me, upon which his divinity needed a friend. It said much for the man's heart that he accepted—welcomed—the call, even though her necessities arose in a pursuit of the colonel, instead of a flight from him.

As though the red-headed woman had followed my thoughts, she continued: "I told him that I should never know a happy moment till I found the colonel. I told him that I felt I'd been the ruin of that man, and that it was up to me to make it right. He never flickered—Ochayso is a man."

She brought the word out in the deepest tone of that flexible voice of hers, which had deepened with life experiences and motherhood. Some-

how it gave me a wistful fear—I wondered if there was any woman in the world who could pronounce just that simple eulogy on me—with as good reason.

"He set to work to convince me that I ought to allow him to furnish the money for the search. I said I'd try to hold out till we heard from you as to what you'd pay me for the best title I could make to the ranch without the colonel's signature. Ochayso came to me three days after, and said he'd located the colonel.

"He won't see you. He'll leave this town, as he has left others, if he finds you're here after him.' That's what Ochayso told me. I guess he thought I would give him a message. But I'd made up my mind to give my own messages. I wasn't able to go just then. I told Ochayso that he'd have to look after matters and see that the colonel came to no harm. I gave him the deed, and the little man never told me—though the colonel himself did afterward—how he swore, how he cursed me when he signed it. He thought, just as I suppose you did, that I wanted the money to spend on myself. If Ochayso lacked any information concerning me, he'd probably have gotten it then.

"Paul was born there in San Francisco. He was a month old the day that Ochayso brought me word that the colonel was down sick. 'I have done my best,' he said to me; 'but the way Colonel Bowie lives, at his age, he is very unsafe.'

"I went to my husband, and I took my month-old baby in my arms—thinking my woes were all over, my troubles ended, that everything would be straightened out right away.

"I was what Lightfoot calls 'mighty much mistaken.' The hardest part was yet to come—the worst medicine I'd had to take. The colonel—there was no danger of his refusing me—he was too far gone; he didn't know me—called me 'mother' part of the time; and the things he told me about that woman he'd married—well, they were enough to have turned her hair gray!"

"But they didn't," said Constance, laughing, and smoothing the crinkled red mass.

"I'm hard to kill," said the red-headed woman. "If I hadn't been, I'd 'a' been dead long ago. When the colonel called me 'mother,' and told me what his red-headed devil of a wife had done to him—well, I *felt* as if I'd die. Do you know, I hated that woman he talked about exactly as though she'd been someone else?"

Mrs. Bowie smiled at us, shaking her head whimsically.

"It was days—pretty tough days to me, I can tell you—before my old man came enough to himself to know me, to hear and understand me when I made my little talk to him—and put my boy down beside him. I don't know whether I'd have had courage to hang on, if it hadn't been for the boy. Children make a lot of difference, don't they, Connie?"

I looked at the revised and improved "red-headed woman," and I admitted, though I had not been asked, that children did, indeed, "make a lot of difference."

XIII

OCHAYSO

AFTER a moment, "Ochayso," breathed Constance. Bless her womanly heart, it was aching for the poor little brown man at thought of this reunion.

Mrs. Bowie's head drooped, as she echoed, "Ochayso—yes. Well, Ochayso came to see me one evening—I remember it was raining. The colonel was better. We were planning to go back to Denver, as soon as he should be strong enough. Ochayso came to say good-bye."

I heard a little breath of a sigh from my wife, before Mrs. Bowie went on:

"I said to him, 'You're going home now, aren't you?' I'll never forget the odd, desolate look he gave me as he answered—but always quietly, composedly; you know Ochayso—'Yes,

I'm going home. I'm going to my own place.'

"Well, that's right,' I said to him. 'I'll be just happy, thinking of you living in all that magnificence—and maybe being elected Mikado—while we're scrabbling up again in Denver. You must come in and say good-bye to the colonel. You'll write to us, of course?'

"He said he had bid the colonel good-bye the day before, and called my attention to the fact that it was the time of the afternoon when my invalid always took his nap, now. I suppose he chose it for that reason. 'I'll—communicate—with you—perhaps.' That's the last word he was going to say to me. I stood there in the door, and watched him walk away in the rain.

"Ochayso,' I called after him. He turned and came back. 'Ochayso,' I begged—oh, you know the frantic, futile feeling, when you've made a mess of another human being's life, and you don't want to take your whipping for it—'Ochayso, I haven't hurt you, have I? Say that—say I haven't hurt you.'

"I'll never forget his eyes as he looked at me; those Orientals don't have expressive eyes generally; but poor Ochayso's soul looked out just then and spoke to me. 'Hurt me? Oh, no,' he said softly. 'It has been—a thing—to remember through many lives—that I knew you, and was permitted—to serve you.'

"Then he was gone for good; and I—I cried like a baby. I couldn't have told you what I was crying about, either."

"You wouldn't have needed to tell me," said Constance. "Poor little man!"

"And that was the last?" I put in.

"Not quite," said Mrs. Bowie. "The next morning a big Irish policeman by the name of Gorman, a man who had been very good to us when we were hunting for the colonel, came to me and said, 'I seen the little Japanese down by the wharf last night.'"

The red-headed woman was a per-

fect mimic; she never repeated anyone's words without reproducing tone and gesture. One could have fancied the Irish policeman himself speaking as she went on:

"He stud so long, a-luckin' at the watter, undecided like, that it got on me narves. I knew he didn't dope, like some o' them felleys; and I jist chanced it that he was low in his mind. "Coom, Mr. Hummyday," I says to him, "you quit a-luckin' at that watter that a-way," says I. And I couldn't tell ye now, mem, what made me say it. "'Tain't good for ye," says I. "Lave it and go home," says I. Missus Boy, my little man give me the purtiest, swatest answer you could ast fer. "You're a good man, Mr. Gorman," says he, in that soft little v'ice o' his'n. "I'm a-takin' farewell o' these scenes, Mr. Gorman," says he, just like that. "I'm a-takin' farewell o' these scenes, for I'm a-goin' home." Well, that made me aisy. We shuck hands; he gev me a gift—money—'tis the little Japanese jint knows what a man needs most—an' he said some other pleasant little things, an' I passed on. Up to the other end of the wharf I meets Mike Reagan that's rel'avin' me, an' I says to him, "Have an eye on the little Japanese jint." I says it, like that, a-jerking my thumb over my shoulder toorge where he stud, not ten steps away. "What Japanese, you bat-eyed Limerick man?" says Reagan. An' I shpun round luk a top. An' thrue as life, Mrs. Boy, there wa'n't nobody there."

"Oh!" murmured Constance.

"Yes, that was the last communication I ever had from Ochayso," went on the missus's own voice quietly. "I was frightened, but Reagan and Gorman both declared they had heard no movement and no splash—nothing. He wasn't there—he was gone. Had he walked away, up the street into the town, and—sailed for Japan on the next P. & O.? You know he could—that was possible." She looked anxiously into our eyes.

"He'll write you some time from Japan," I found myself saying, "telling

you of the wife and family he has, and the great things he's accomplishing." But I spoke without conviction.

"It might be just that way, you know," the red-headed woman urged again.

And nobody demurred; we sat mute.

XIV

"TRUMPED!"

WE were smoking together after dinner; and I had paid the missus some pretty heartfelt compliments.

"Lorelei was always all right, if I'd known how to take her. She's not so much changed, Art; you'll find her about as lively and enterprising as ever—it's me."

The colonel gnawed his cigar for a moment in silence. "Remember the bishop?" he said, looking up suddenly.

I nodded. "I'll never forget those conundrums," I supplied, laughing.

"John Sheldon's dead," said the colonel thoughtfully. "I wish he could have seen Lorelei as she is now. I wish he could have visited us once again. I told you then she could have pleased him, if she'd tried—now I'd know how to put her on her mettle and make her try. I've got an aunt, my mother's youngest sister; she has lived all her life in a little New England village, and she's the primmest old soul you ever saw; but I'm very fond of her. Aunt Emmeline took it into her head to visit Denver a year or so ago."

The colonel looked at me and laughed one of his quizzical laughs. Visions of what the red-headed woman would be impelled to do to this saintly spinster set me laughing to answer him.

"Remember how I queered things when the bishop was expected?" he asked. "Remember how I drew the poor girl up in line and lectured her till she'd have been ashamed not to kick over the traces and show me whether she had a spark of spirit in her?"

"I suppose it did work that way," I said reluctantly.

"Oh, come, now—you know it did. Listen to how I managed her when Aunt Em was expected, and you have the best of my system. I noticed her eyes sort of beginning to show the white when I described Aunt Em to her. I told her that lots of things we thought were all right would be likely to shock the dear old lady. Then I said: 'If you don't like the job, I'll take her to the Continental Hotel and hire a suite for her.' See? I put it to her square; and I was ready to back my play."

"Lorelei looked at me right funny. She'd got used to my coming out ahead where the proprieties were concerned; but this was a new one, and she was bound to try it for what it was worth—'Oh, I guess I can entertain your kins-folks; I guess I can,' she said in that devilish way of hers that used to make me grind my teeth and that makes me laugh now."

"Well," I told her, "any time you say the word she goes to the Continental—and I go with her."

"She began with my aunt just about the way she did with the bishop. But women are a little quicker on the trigger, and Aunt Em started off thinking she had a pretty fine niece. Then I could see it coming into my wife's head to try a little funny business on the old lady. She began to tell her about my mother-in-law's boarding-house in San Francisco—and she told it with the frills on. Aunt Em's people—my mother's people—think they are rather aristocratic, and I could see her dear old face getting as long as my arm."

"Aunt Em," says I, "did you ever board at a hotel?"

"Lorelei pulled up short and looked at me. Then she tossed up her head like a bronco and went in again. At the next opening she gave me I says to Aunt Em:

"You say you never boarded at a hotel? Well, I just guessed as much. The Continental here is very fine—it's a famous place—and I've had a scheme to take you there for the rest of your stay. I've picked out an awful pretty suite for you; and I'll go over and

board there too during your visit, so you won't be lonesome. It will be a new experience for a village person like yourself."

The colonel leaned back in his chair, shaking with laughter.

"Art—oh, Art! you know what a cyclone she is. In about two minutes she had Aunt Em around the neck and was hugging her and crying and saying that she didn't want her dear auntie to run away and leave her. 'I want you to teach me how to make all those nice Yankee dishes that my husband loves,' she says. And I thought she might try, a little later, to get Aunt Em into the kitchen. I wasn't scared. I knew I had the trump up my sleeve; and after all, she wasn't likely to turn round on a thing like that—you remember she never did. Oh, they were like two turtledoves during the rest of Aunt Em's stay. I was left out, as a mere man, and Lorelei even acquired a

New England accent that lasted her for a month!"

The colonel and I laughed together like two old campaigners who had gone side by side through battle and siege.

"Easy, ain't it, when you know the way?" he asked me.

"Yes," I answered, "like everything else in life. It's to learn 'the way' that we pay so high a price."

"I've no kick coming," observed the colonel, as he tossed away the stump of his cigar. "The knowledge is well worth the price." He rose. "Shall we join the ladies?" he suggested. "I want you to see more of my children—I want to show 'em off to you."

"And I want to show off mine!" I cried.

We looked into each other's eyes and laughed; two doting fathers, each suspecting the other of stories about "When Harry was five," and "Before Dorothy was eight months old."



THE NEW ARGO

SUNLIGHTED earth and warmth of pleasant places
 Set on green slopes touched with the life of spring;
 Clinging of hands and pleading of sweet faces,
 Echoes of song dear voices used to sing:
 These fold us round with all too soft entreating,
 To win us back among the happy days
 That spread about us e'er one dream came fleeting
 To lead us forth into untrodden ways.

They fold us round, and yet they cannot stay us,
 For we are bound to lands beyond the stars.
 Nor circumstance nor pleasure shall delay us,
 Nor duty hold us with its stubborn bars.
 Where we are going duty fades, and pleasure;
 Our course is set beneath strange lighted skies
 Beyond hope high, and holy beyond measure,
 Whose flaming beauty blasts, or glorifies.

The sail is filling! Past familiar beaches,
 Out through the rocks and over the blue flow
 We turn toward unknown lands and empty reaches
 Of sea and sky where demon tempests blow.
 We turn, with hearts made firm to face the billow,
 To sail beyond the sunset's farthest gleams,
 Till in the end the stars shall be our pillow
 And our last sleep shall thrill with deathless dreams.

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE.

THE SHADOW OF A SHADOW

By William R. Lighton

IN the pale half-light of the early winter morning Morgan left his bedroom and groped his way through the upper hall to the head of the stairs. The thick carpets gave back only a faint whisper of sound under his tread, but as he passed the door of his wife's room he stepped with especial care, guarding against any chance of disturbing her. Her hours were wholly different from his, and he well knew how jealous she was of her morning quiet.

The house was well warmed, almost to the point of discomfort, but there was that in the dead silence and gloom which affected him like a spiritual chill. As his foot felt for and found the topmost step he descended slowly, pausing once at the broad landing and leaning heavily against the rail for a moment, as though holding back from something he dreaded. The lower floor was in deeper darkness, the shades closely drawn, shutting out all but a thin, lifeless gleam that filtered through somehow, making the furnishings of rooms and hall appear as huge, spectral shapes, distorted and unfamiliar. Morgan had slept but fitfully, with long waking intervals of brooding anxiety, and to his troubled senses this air of ghostliness was almost real. He hurried, half fearfully, to the dining-room door and pushed it open with quick impatience, grateful for the glare of light that brought things back to their normal form.

The table was made ready for his accustomed solitary breakfast, and a sleepy maid was awaiting his coming. As he entered she went out to the kitchen to serve him, and he dropped

into his chair, pulling the gas table-lamp to his elbow and opening the morning newspapers that lay beside his plate, glancing over the first headlines with sharp, hungry eagerness, picking up the tangled threads of events which had been tirelessly, fatefully spinning during the night hours, ready to be woven into the fabric of his new day's life.

Seen thus, with the yellow lamplight upon it, his was an unusual face, showing exceptional strength, but with many signs that strength had been taxed to the very uttermost; bold and clean-lined, but with every line drawn to the straining tension of strung steel wire. His lips and jaw were set grimly, his gray eyes hot and restless; the muscles of his cheeks and temples quivered with the nervous setting and relaxing of his teeth. There was an indefinable poise in his square shoulders and full-browed head which gave assurance that he had not passed out of the virile vigor of youth; yet stamped clearly upon every feature and attitude and movement was something which said, "Worn and weary and old before his time." Whatever his struggle, he had clearly found it hard, joyless; whatever the outcome, it had clearly been to him more a defeat than a victory.

The maid brought his usual bowl of oatmeal and cream and a pot of strong coffee. He ate mechanically because he must, as a means of fitting himself for the long morning's work; and as he ate, one of his papers was propped before his plate against the sugar-basin, that he might make every moment of double value. More than once his

spoon was idle while he read with straining attention, his mental appetite ravenous.

One story held first place in all the papers—garish rumors of war in the Far East. The break had not yet come, but the news from all the capitals of the world showed that the nations were already taking it for granted. Morgan's alert wits sought in vain for something they could lay firm hold upon; for even tangible bad news would have been easier to bear, in his troubled state of mind, than these vague forebodings of disaster lurking a little way ahead, as if biding its time and awaiting a fuller opportunity. As he finished that part of his paper he was shaking as with cold.

He turned then to the market page, setting the paper in place again and scanning the crowded maze of figures in the wheat reports, bending forward with squinting eyes to catch the fine type. Yesterday's quotations he knew already; they were burned into his mind all too deeply; but he glanced over them again, hurriedly, and read with painstaking care the excited stories cabled from the world's commercial centres, after the close of the day's markets. They bore all one burden: The world over, wheat was wild to the point of frenzy, unpredictable as the sea in a tempest, and with a threat of tempest peril in the tossing waves and gulf-like troughs of prices.

The muscles of Morgan's throat tightened tensely, making it impossible to swallow more of his breakfast. He knew well that this was to be for him a day of fate. By nightfall, in all likelihood, he would be saved or wholly ruined. He pushed back from the table and arose, straightening his shoulders stiffly, as if adjusting them to a heavy load. The maid had placed his coat before the open fire to warm, and he put it on slowly, then went with halting step into the darkened hall.

At the outer door he was halted by a woman's voice, calling to him from the head of the stairway: "Is that you, Dick?"

"Yes," he answered quietly, and stood waiting.

"I shall need some money today," the voice said coldly, out of the gloom. "Can you leave it for me?"

He hesitated, striving to speak with composure. "How much do you want, Kate?" he asked.

There was a hint of impatience in the reply. "Oh, whatever you can give me. Three or four hundred dollars—five hundred, if you have it. The Old Ladies' Hospital needs my subscription. That's two hundred. And I must get ready for my reception on Monday. Five hundred will be little enough."

"I haven't so much with me," he said. "I'll have to send it to you from the office. Shall I send a cheque, or the money?"

"Anything," came the short answer, followed by the sound of a closing door. There was no other word of parting. With a deep-drawn sigh, Morgan went out into the cold gray of the morning, to meet what was to come.

The street was covered with fine snow, drifting and massing before a blustering wind. A motor-car was passing the door, led by a track-sweeper that was filling the air with a white, whirling cloud. It was not a morning for walking; but Morgan felt an imperative need for facing the storm, using his strength against it, beating his way through it, as though to conquer a physical difficulty would put him in form for the other fight which must come before the day's end. With hat pulled low over his eyes, and head bent to the force of the wind, he set off. There were no other pedestrians to bear him company; if any had been abroad before him, their paths through the drifts had been closed as soon as made, and he had to break his own way. It was slow, hard work, yet it brought him a certain robust comfort, as his body warmed with the struggle.

It was nearly a mile to his office, and the latter part of the way led through the lower quarter of the town,

where improvement had been but fitful, and where crowded squatters' shanties vied for place with the huge, smoke-blackened piles of wholesale houses that needed trackage room along the railroads. In the most unsightly part of this district stood a square mass of brick, grimy and forbidding, bearing across its front the legend, "The Richard Morgan Iron Company."

The office was in one corner of the main building, at the end of a long, littered platform built out against the tracks. The door was not yet unlocked, and Morgan let himself in with his own key, muttering against the tardiness of his clerks; but a glance at the clock showed him that he was a good half-hour before time. The old-fashioned office stove held no fire, and the chill of the zero weather without had crept into the dingy room. Morgan kindled a fire; then, with his coat collar turned up about his ears and his hands pushed deep into his pockets, he paced the length of the room, back and forth, between the double row of desks, brooding. The morning mail had not yet been delivered; the day's flood of telegrams would not begin before nine o'clock; at the best, there was a dull hour of suspense ahead, if he waited upon the ordinary routine. He threw off his coat and stepped to the telephone-box, calling for the editorial rooms of an uptown newspaper.

"Who's this?" he queried. "Bailey? Well, say, old man, this is Morgan. Got any Japanese news, since the morning edition? Too soon? I suppose so. Well, listen a minute: I've got to have the news today, while it's still hot. I've got it covered, as well as it can be privately; but I'll make it right with you if you'll give me a line over the 'phone on everything that comes, as soon as you get it. See? I'll make it the best day's work you ever did in all your overworked life. Keep me posted, right up to the limit, on all your press despatches from everywhere—London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Tokio—everywhere and everything. All right; sure, now."

He went to his private desk, in its partitioned recess, and made a hardy effort to bring order out of the cluttered papers and letters, to be ready for his stenographers; but his fingers were still stiffened with cold and his wits numb with chilling anxiety, so that he made poor headway—forgetting, going back and covering the same ground many times, until he was chafing over his own inaptitude. The book-keepers and clerks began to arrive, one by one; and slowly, in the office and in the great rooms beyond, rose the familiar sounds of the day's grind, swelling and swelling like a full-flowing tide. After ridding himself of the first imperative details, Morgan abandoned the futile effort of keeping his accustomed full share in the work, shifting it to other hands, and giving himself up to the racking trial of mere waiting, staring moodily out of the window beside his desk at the unlovely jumble of sooty walls, weather-beaten sheds and driving snow; hearing the jumble of harsh, unlovely noises, but heeding nothing. A dull ache grew at the back of his head, spreading to the muscles of his neck.

The suspense was becoming intolerable when the call-bell of his desk-telephone jangled.

"Morgan?" called an incisive voice. "This is Bailey of the *World*. Here's something for you, from St. Petersburg. The Associated Press man cables he's got information that Russia will meet practically every demand the Japs make; says instructions will be sent at once. He doesn't give his authority, but says it's good. Looks like peace, if it's so; but maybe it's only a pipe. Get me?"

"Thanks, Jim," Morgan answered. "That's the stuff! Keep her coming, whatever you get." His hand shook as he hung up the receiver, and his aching head throbbed with a quick spasm of hope. "Ah!" he gasped, "if it's only true! But now what can I do?" He sat for a little time with his head bent upon his hands. "I can't think!" he complained querulously. "I'm in no condition to run

the thing alone. I've got to have help." And again he turned to his telephone.

"Put Gridley up," he commanded the girl who answered the call; and a moment later, "Say, Grid, this is Dick Morgan. Come down; I want you, bad, at my office. Cut everything up there and come *quick*. It's life and death to me. *Come*, I tell you!"

And Gridley came; a tall, lean, hard-featured man, dispassionate and impersonal as a piece of mechanism—a man's counselor.

"A lovely day for calling out your friends," he said, with unsmiling irony, as he shook and stamped off the snow, "and a lovely corner of the world you've got down here to call them to. Gad! I hope there's something doing to pay for this trip."

Morgan closed his private door, shoved a chair into place for his caller, and shot straight to the point.

"Grid, I'm up against it, good and hard. I want to know what you think. It's this Far Eastern business. I thought I saw my chance, when the row began, and I broke into the wheat market. I've been discounting the war scare and selling May short, and I'm in clear up to my neck—three-quarters of a million bushels. I thought I knew Asiatic politics down to the ground; but I guess I didn't. The thing's been getting worse on me. The way it looks this morning, I'm scared, for the first time in my life. If it turns out wrong, I stand to lose everything I've got—everything. I want to know how it looks to you."

As he listened, Gridley's face betrayed no emotion beyond what was shown by a narrowing of his steel-gray eyes and a close contraction of his thin lips. When Morgan paused, he sat for a time, tilting his chair back and forth, regarding the anxious face before him curiously.

"You've sold three-quarters of a million short," he echoed drily, "and on this kind of a market? And you were a stranger to the game up to this deal, weren't you? Dick! Why, if you had to fool with something besides

iron, you ought to have tried toy balloons, or rubber dolls, or——"

"Oh, cut that out!" Morgan interrupted, with hot impatience. "I know I'm all kinds of an ass, without having you point it out. I had no business to do it; but—I'll tell you the whole thing—it was a case of having to do something outside of iron. I wasn't making money enough, and I was getting worse involved all the time. This is strictly confidential. I figured that I'd just as soon go to smash all at once as to have the agony drawn out for a year or so. The worst can't be worse than a smash."

"But, man alive!" Gridley broke in harshly, "*wheat*, of all things; and this time of all times, with a big war brewing! Why, I've refused point-blank to buy or sell a bushel for any of my customers for the last six weeks, unless they'd agree to take the whole responsibility. Who's your broker? What's he been telling you?"

Morgan flushed uncomfortably. "It's Denslow, of Chicago," he said shortly. "I didn't want to be gossiped about here at home."

The telephone interrupted. "Dick, you haven't sent me that cheque," his wife's voice said aggrievedly. "I'm waiting to go out."

"Oh, Kate, I'm sorry!" he said in quick contrition. "I've been busy, and worried, and—never mind; I'll call a messenger right away."

But when he turned about, Gridley caught him with an abrupt question:

"Look here, if you're afraid to hold on, why don't you cover your deals? It would take——"

"No!" Morgan returned stoutly. "I won't do it. In the first place, I can't. I haven't money enough left. I've borrowed heavily as it is, to keep the other proposition going. Besides, I'm not built right for a quitter. I can't hedge after enduring what I have, just for the sake of putting myself back where I started. I'd rather see it through the way it stands, now that I'm tolerably reconciled to it."

A boy brought a telegram and Morgan tore open the envelope, read the

terse message at a glance and passed it across the desk to Gridley.

"The *World* gave me that information an hour ago," he said. "This simply confirms their despatches. It may mean peace, Grid; if it does, I'm a made man!" He bent forward upon the desk, his fingers locked together, his lips parted, his eyes shining with excitement. "Listen to me!" he cried. "It's all blind chance—the whole rank business of living and fighting. I'm going to take the chance; I'm going to run my sales up to a round million, and you've got to do it for me. You go back uptown and sell a quarter million May for me, at the market."

"Gently, Dick," Gridley said, with stoic calm. "You don't want to court absolute ruin."

"If war comes I'm practically ruined anyway," Morgan retorted. "I'll have to start fresh; and I'd rather start with nothing, as I did at first, than with a lot of broken salvage from a wreck. I hate wreckage. I've made up my mind. I can scrape up just about enough to carry the deal over the rest of the week the way it's been going, and I can't stand the strain a minute longer. For God's sake, Grid, go!"

When he was gone Morgan sank forward, his head upon his outstretched arms, his brain reeling with the mad rush of his fever blood. Time passed and he took no account of it, nor of aught else, until the deep-throated whistle over the engine-room bellowed its hoarse cry of noon.

A light step followed close upon the sound, arousing him, and he saw his wife standing in the doorway regarding him curiously.

"Oh, Kate!" he cried, struggling to his feet. "Your cheque! I forgot again! It's been a hard morning, and I've made you come clear down here over these wretched streets! I'm very sorry. Sit down, just a minute, till I get the cheque written."

But she stood waiting in silence while he found his book and pen. She seemed strangely out of place in the somber, time-worn room. She was gowned with an almost regal richness

and superbly beautiful. Upon her well-poised head was a wealth of red-gold hair, so luxuriant that it seemed to threaten imminent rebellion against the confinement of coil and pin; her cheeks, touched by the winter wind, showed the rose-cream tints of perfect health; her gold-brown eyes were glorious; from all her person there radiated the exquisite charm of delicious womanhood. Yet, despite this assurance of rare warmth and power of gentleness, there was upon her, as she first faced her husband, an air of strange reserve, amounting even to coldness—such coldness as comes cruelly, inevitably, between the man and the woman when vital sympathy has died away.

But as he bent over his desk and she was unobserved, her reserve grew less. Her eyes went roving in quick, furtive glances about the big, ugly room, taking in its scarred, sordid details, lingering here and there insistently, before coming slowly back to rest upon Morgan's bowed shoulders and tumbled, graying hair. As she gazed at him fixedly there arose from the depths of her eyes a new light, shy, baffled, baffling, and her full lips parted tremulously, their firm lines melting, as if warm words hovered close. But the words were not spoken; for Morgan turned toward her, and on the instant there came over her again that inscrutable restraint, inclosing her like a mantle of ice, shutting him out completely.

"I'm sorry, Kate," he said again, as he offered the cheque. She made no direct answer, but accepted the scrawled, formal slip of paper, tucking it carelessly into her muff. "Thank you," she murmured, and turned quietly away and left him.

He stood erect, his eyes dwelling upon her as she swept royally out past the crowded files of desks; and when the door had closed upon her still he stood, staring, staring.

"Thank God!" he breathed. "It can't last forever."

Yet there was something of eternity in the first dragging hours of the after-

noon while he waited for the fatal word. Though he felt it impending, it came at last with stunning suddenness. It was three o'clock when Bailey called him again to the telephone.

"Morgan? Well, it's sure-enough war. The Japs have begun it—fired on one of the Russian squadrons over yonder. It's official. The story's just coming over the wire now; we'll be on the street with an extra in ten minutes."

Slowly, methodically, after the custom of years, Morgan closed his desk, making sure that the lock had caught, then drew on his coat and left the office, turning by unconscious impulse toward home. He felt no sharp pang of emotion; nothing of despair, nor even of regret—nothing but a profound, pulseless apathy. The crass fact of his ruin occurred to him only as something remote, impersonal, unrelated to himself. He seemed to have lost all power to think or to feel; the people he passed on the street appeared as but flitting phantasms, formless and shadowy.

How he reached his home he could hardly have told, nor how it was that he found his way through the well-ordered silence to his own room. The materials for a fire lay ready to be kindled in the open grate, and, true to long habit, he applied a match, then exchanged his shoes and coat for slippers and smoking-jacket and sat down in his favorite chair before the rising blaze. Out of the depths of sheer exhaustion of body and mind he passed into heavy sleep.

The early night was falling when he awoke; and with his waking came a swift, sure realization of what had occurred and all it meant. Despair came, too, and abject despondency—a complete rout of his man's courage. For a little time he paced his room, watching the dull shadows come creeping into the corners until they seemed full of crowding, mocking shapes. He switched on the incandescent lights beside his dressing-stand and stood for a moment, regarding the image

of his haggard face reflected in the mirror.

"I guess it's about all over," he said aloud, and opened one of the drawers, where lay a dainty, pearl-handled pistol. He took the weapon in his hand, looking to see that the chambers were filled, then paused, irresolute, as his glance fell by chance upon a packet of letters lying in the drawer, tied with a bit of faded blue ribbon. An involuntary groan, as of sharp pain, escaped him. He laid the pistol down, took up the packet and returned to his seat before the fire.

There were two letters and a telegram. The letters were of old dates, a dozen or fifteen years gone. The first was of many pages, written in a dainty girl's fine tracery, and filled with the licensed phrases of a girl's ecstatic love.

"Dear Lord of my Heart," it began: "Just to think that in the whole year of our wonderful joy I have never written to you so much as a word, because we have never been apart for so much as a day! And now I do not know how to go about a love letter. Out of the wealth of what is in my heart for you, I distrust my poor pen to pick and choose, trying to say those things which I have been used to saying to you with my living lips. . . .

"Our parting is to be very short, beloved; yet the thought of it has saddened me all day, for it has set me to wondering what other partings, perhaps even hard and terrible, may be in store for us, in the time to come. I pray God may never let me leave you again until that final leave-taking which even He cannot put off for always. But this I know, dear one: While we both live, though the breadth of the wide world is between us, we shall not be separated. Heaven does not make wicked jests with love like ours. Always and forever, always and forever, my heart will beat against yours, even through far spaces. . . . If my words have made you sad, too, remember this and be passionately glad: I am buying my wedding things! In another month I shall be your wife!"

The other letter was held in a bulky, misshapen envelope, the bulk made by a silver spoon. The letter bore date more than two years later than the first, and was headed, "Home, Sunday Morning, and Your Birthday."

"Here is my gift to you, my king," it ran. "Are you puzzling over what it means? You'll never guess! It happened an hour ago. I was giving baby Dick his breakfast, when I heard the *teeniest* little sound; and when I took the spoon away, there was the *teeniest* little mark. I don't believe your man's eyes can see it; but it's there. We're getting to be old people, Dicky; our boy has a tooth. I have kissed the wee mark, and send it to you to be kissed, too.

"Oh, I wish you could see him, here on the floor at my feet, pulling at my shoe-lace and laughing at me with his rose-red lips. Such a dear rogue, so strong and happy! It is cruel to be poor, when poverty keeps you away from him. Yet it is a blessed poverty, too, beloved, for it gives me inexpressible content. I am wicked even to hint that there is anything wanting, though I do want you, every minute of my life."

There was much more of a girl-mother's rapture over her first-born; and then a postscript:

"Forgive me, dear, for adding a word that may worry you; but my money is all gone, excepting one big, round silver dollar, which I'm holding on to for dear life. Now don't take this too seriously. I need nothing but some coal. The bin will be quite empty in a day or two. Tell me where I shall get more, and if I shall say that it will be paid for when you come home again. Of everything else there is enough to withstand a siege. *Don't* worry. What's the good of it, dear heart, when we have our boy, and such a lot besides too priceless to be measured? And I love you!"

With ineffable tenderness Morgan lifted the tarnished spoon from his knee and touched it with his lips; then he opened the telegram.

"Come at once," it said. "Baby

Dick has diphtheria. Pray God to spare him to us."

Morgan sat for a long time, staring into the glow of the dying fire, while the ethereal hosts of memory marshaled themselves before his fixed gaze. Two forms persisted; one the cherubic figure of the dead babe, and the other, no less angelically lovely, that of his wife in the dear days when her wifehood was joyful, beautiful. Suddenly he started to his feet with a stifled oath that had no least profane savor:

"No, by God! I'll wait until I hear what she has to say to me. There's time enough after that."

He dressed for dinner with scrupulous care, compelling his mood, and went down to the dining-room, where the staid butler awaited him.

"Mrs. Morgan telephoned that she is dining out tonight," the man said.

"Very well," Morgan answered quietly. Her absence was not unusual. It had been a day of waiting, with a lifetime compressed within its few hours; he could wait a little longer, now that resolution had come to him again, giving him something worth waiting for. He ate his dinner with an appetite that surprised him, dallying over the courses.

"Tell Mrs. Morgan's maid that I wish to see her when she comes home," he said to the butler when he had finished. "I shall be in my room. Say to the maid that it is important."

It was near to midnight when he heard his wife come in. She came directly to his door and knocked. He opened the door for her to enter, and their eyes met; hers questioning, his gravely intent. It was long since he had summoned her in this fashion, or since they had met on any but a politely formal footing.

"Harriet said you wished to speak to me?" she said inquiringly.

"Yes," he returned. "I must talk to you for a little while. Sit down, Kate."

She took his deep chair before the fire, and he stood opposite her, his arm resting upon the mantel, his eyes dwelling fixedly upon her. Now that

the chance was his, he did not know how to begin. In the hours since dinner he had been thinking, not of his wife of today, but as she used to be; that image had filled his heart and mind completely. It needed a sharp readjustment of his faculties to bring him into relation with the stately creature before him, with her repressed, unresponsive self-possession. It was as though his thoughts dealt with two women, as distinct as the poles.

She had not taken time to remove her hat or wraps; but now, before the warmth of the blaze, she released the fastenings of her heavy furs and threw them back from her shoulders. She was wondrously beautiful, in her dinner-gown of creamy satin, whose tint and luster, in the glow of the firelight, seemed not so rich or soft as those of her round neck and bosom. Though her glance was downcast, she appeared aware of his intent scrutiny, and she was ill at ease, her breath coming unevenly, her gloved hands toying with the ends of her fur boa. By and bye she raised her eyes to his, as if to prompt his tardy tongue.

"Kate," he said, "you haven't heard anything tonight, at your dinner?"

"Heard anything?" she echoed. "No, I have heard nothing. What is it?"

"I didn't know but that it might have been whispered about. It isn't pleasant to say; but it must be told to you some time. I—we—Kate, we are poor folks again. Our money is all gone."

She flashed a look upon him, full of startled wonder, her lips parted, the warm flush upon her cheeks giving place to a clear, profound pallor. "Our money—" she whispered faintly.

"It happened today—this afternoon," he went on. "I have lost every dollar I owned, and something more besides, I'm afraid. I haven't figured it out exactly; but it's certain that we sha'n't have anything left."

There followed a long, intense pause. After the first shock of surprise she had retired again behind her impenetrable

mask of reserve, whence she sent out no sign to him, leaving him to grope his way as he might.

"It's a foolish story, you'll think," he said presently. "I speculated in wheat on the war market and failed completely. I had to do something—or I thought so. We had been living beyond our means for a year or more, and I couldn't keep it going. I ought to have told you, no doubt; but I—couldn't, somehow. I preferred the other way. We haven't been very frank or intimate lately in talking about our affairs, and I held to that habit and kept my own counsels."

He had spoken evenly, as though reciting no more than a commonplace matter of fact. If he had expected her to show any depth of feeling he was disappointed, for she was outwardly as impassive as himself.

"That's all, Kate," he went on, when the silence was growing almost tangible. "We must start again, as we started at first—poverty-pinched and following the old, careful contrivances about the dollars. It will be very hard for you, I'm afraid, after these late years. I've been wondering—I should like to know what you think about what we'd better do."

Again she looked into his eyes, intently, searchingly. "What I think?" she said quietly. "Are you sure it matters? And isn't it a trifle late to ask that now?"

He winced uncomfortably, but held to his even speech. "I am in the wrong, of course. But I can't go back now and correct what's been done. We'll have to face things as they are. I shall have to begin again; and you will have to share with me in what comes, won't you? That's why I ask this of you. Maybe we can make it go better this time."

What struggle she had with herself he could only guess, watching her closely, trying to read her thoughts by the signs he had known so well in the earlier years. He did not read aright. He thought her concerned over her own changed estate, trying to prefigure the hundred humiliations ahead.

He was wholly unprepared for her next words, spoken with a smothered sigh, after another long interval.

"Tell me this, Dick, first—do you want to be rich again?"

He caught his breath sharply, and his heart leaped. "Rich!" he cried. "Rich!" The word was hot with sudden, irrepressible passion. "I loathe the whole devil's contrivance of riches! To save my poor soul, I can't tell what took me into the muck of it. And I've spent ten years of my life in getting rich. Ten good years conjuring a huge cloud over me and living in the black shadow of it. I never really wanted a lot of money; we didn't need it. It was just one of hell's hideous lures for enticing a man away from peace and content. When I'd started I couldn't stop. Why, even when the smash came this afternoon I still thought of the dollars as the very essence of life. I didn't know how I hated them. They've spoiled everything I ever cared for; they've spoiled me and they've corrupted you. There's nothing between us any more that isn't sordid and common, with a price on it. That isn't as it ought to be, nor as it used to be. I'm sick at heart with it all. Kate, I'd give everything I have to hope for in the future in exchange for just one day of the time when we were poor, when we knew what honest love meant—love of each other, and of—of—ah!"

He caught himself up in his torrent of speech, as by a forcible effort. "There! I didn't mean to appear theatrical. We must look at the thing sensibly, I suppose, and make some sort of a sensible plan."

She had heard him through without a word or a sign. At the last she merely stirred slightly, gathering her wraps together from the chair-arms.

"Wait a few moments," she said, rising. "I am too warm. I must lay off these things. I'll come back in a little while."

An hour passed and she had not returned. After the first few minutes he waited in nerveless indifference, the dead level of his thoughts unstirred

by so much as a passing breath of feeling, until the little clock on the mantel startled the deep silence with the stroke of one. Then he heard his door open very gently, and he stood up and faced sharply about.

It was his wife again; yet not the woman who had left him an hour before. "Kate!" he breathed, and his hands caught at the back of his chair for support. In a flash he understood.

She stood just within the doorway, her hands clasped before her, her cheeks flushed hot, her vivid lips parted in a tremulous smile, her eyes—springs of living light—meeting his. She had put aside her exquisite gown and in its stead she wore a simple house-dress of a fashion long gone, its sober, serviceable gray relieved by a knot of scarlet ribbon at the throat. Her elaborate dinner coiffure was changed, too, the mass of her glorious hair gathered in a thick braid, coiled low upon her beautiful neck, with light strands of its red gold lying free about her forehead and ears. There was in her presence the magic of a resurrection from the dead, and his famished soul leaped out to meet her.

She advanced a slow step or two, trembling, but with a brave air.

"Do you remember this dress, Dicky?" she asked, her voice vibrant. "It's the one I used to wear, when I had my boy. I've kept it ever since, and I put it on sometimes—oh, often and often!—when I'm alone in my room in the mornings, and don't know what to do with myself for loneliness. Do you see this tiny spot on the breast? That's where I held him against me, once, to comfort him, when he fell and struck his little forehead and made it bleed. I would never let the spot be taken out; but it's almost faded away now. And do you see this tiny torn place in the ruching? He made that, one day, with his little hands, when he was hungry and wanted to be nursed. I wouldn't mend it for the world. Oh, Dicky, Dicky!"

Her calm gave way then, and she hid her face in her hands with an in-

articulate cry. His arms were about her, his cheek resting with infinite gentleness upon her soft hair, his voice soothing her, his man's strength enfolding her.

"Oh, Dick, is it *real*?" she sobbed. "Is that dreadful time all gone?"

"Kate! My blessed wife!" he murmured.

She lay long in his embrace, letting her tears flow without check. Then, suddenly, she drew away from him, holding him at arm's length.

"Have you thought that I cared for the money?" she said. "You said you hated it. Sometimes I have almost hated you for giving it to me—dollars and dollars, when you were giving me nothing else. I wish I had had the courage to tell you. I've often been near to it. Today, when I went to you and you gave me the cheque I had asked for, and then let me go away—it was horrible! And you were so worn and old, wearing your soul away with the wickedness of it. I was ready to go on my knees to you, to bring you back to me. I would have

done it, if you had spoken a human word to me. But you spoke as though you thought the cheque was everything to me, and all I wanted. It hurt me cruelly. Why, being rich has been nearly a tragedy for us both, hasn't it?" With a quick revulsion of feeling she drew his face to hers and kissed him, laughing happily. "And now we're poor again! The money is gone. I'm glad, beloved—*glad!*"

In the fulness of their content they sat before the fire until the night was far spent, planning the new future and tasting before-time of its joy.

"'A black shadow,' you called it," she said by and bye. "But it's gone, dear, hasn't it?—like 'the shadow of a shadow.'" And again:

"Do you remember what we used to read about rich men and the kingdom of heaven? Do you understand now how true that is?"

He took her fair head between his hands, turning her fair face to his, bending fondly above her.

"Yes," he said simply. "I understand; for this is heaven."



POOR ALYCE WYSE!

THERE was a girl in our town,
Her name was Alice Wise;
She went into society
And scratched out both the I's.

And when she found what she had done,
With all her might and main
She married Ikey Icklestein,
And scratched them in again!

JACQUES FUTRELLE.



A FOOL said: "When I am with women I laugh with them or at them; when I am alone I laugh at myself."
Was he a fool?

LOVE AND THE WEATHER BUREAU

By Edward Childs Carpenter

SHE told him with complacent mendacity that she had no notion of loving him. Whereupon he, being somewhat cunning in the ways of women, garnered her promptly and said, "Elise, I'll marry you tomorrow—if the weather's clear!"

The next day it rained.

The patter of rain against the window awoke Elise. She sat up in bed, smiled and blew a kiss to the storm. "But for you," she confided, "I should never have known the luxury of being engaged, even for a day. Now I am perfectly happy. I shall pray for clear weather tomorrow."

Her prayer was answered. So he, who had elected himself arbiter of her fate, called early with the marriage license in one hand and the wedding ring in the other. He found time, before she finally called over the balusters, to make forty-seven laps of the big hall and to compute the length of the minute hand in the grandfather clock by dividing the circumference of the dial by 3.1416 and splitting the result in two. Gymnastics, both physical and mental, were forgotten when Elise timorously signaled him from above.

"Hugh dear, it will be impossible for me to marry you today!"

"How's that?" he inquired rather sternly.

She hesitated a moment. "Must I tell you?"

"Suit yourself about that; only it's customary, between friends, to offer some explanation when one smashes an engagement!"

"But it isn't smashed, dearie—it's—it's just this: We had strawberries

last night for supper. You—you may not know, but sometimes they disagree with me."

"I'd let them alone, then!"

"Oh, I've eaten them other times and—and nothing happened."

"It's a gamble, eh, girl?"

"Yes, boy; and I've lost my complexion; my cheeks are all over little pink spots."

"That's tough luck," he remarked sympathetically. "You couldn't think of getting married—looking such a fright! I wouldn't even think of asking you; but just the same, Elise, dearest, I *am* a bit disappointed."

"You're a dear. good thing to be disappointed and to understand. I was afraid you wouldn't! Now I know we shall be happy, love; and, for your sake, I want to look my prettiest on our wedding day; but if you insist, Hugh dear, and don't think the parson might fancy I've got chicken-pox, I'll—I'll——"

"As if I would, Elise darling! No! The license will keep and so will the ring. Just 'phone me at the bank when you're—er—presentable."

"Must it be a clear day, dearest?"

"Of course! I don't believe in starting any enterprise on a rainy day. Look at our bank! It rained cats and all the other domestic animals on the morning of our opening. I begged the president to put it off until the first clear day, and he wouldn't. Now we're going into the hands of the receiver."

"I leave it all to you, love," she submitted divinely.

"Very well, little girl. *Au revoir!* No more strawberries, remember!"

"Never again!"

He made for the street door.

"Hugh dear," came Elise's voice once more from above; "you're sure you aren't the least bit angry with me?"

"Not at all, sweetheart!"

"Not a weeney, tiny bit?"

"Not an atom!"

"Hugh, I'd like to—to kiss you for that!"

"Very well, I'll run up!"

"No, no—you mustn't . . . no!" This panically. But he had started up the stairs. "Hugh!" a laugh and a command.

He paused and looked up. "Well?"

A huge whisper floated down to him: "I l-o-v-e you!" She disappeared.

He lingered a moment, sighed benevolently and left the house.

That evening her room blossomed into a rose bower. Elise telephoned Hugh the next day that her complexion was convalescent and that if the weather should clear—

"Clear!" he shouted back brusquely, though he did not intend to be short with her—it was simply that the bank had been sealed by the receiver and that he had been annoyed by depositors asking if they might expect ten cents on the dollar. "Clear!" he repeated. "No such luck. The weather bureau person says we're going to have rain steadily for a week."

"I'm just broken-hearted, dearest!" That is what Elise said. This is what she thought: "How fortunate! If it's going to rain for a week I can go to New York, and though I may not find time to buy a complete trousseau, at least I should be able to pick up a stunning hat."

Elise went to New York and was blissfully engaged in the occupation of searching for a hat to match an extraordinary hat-pin—which she had bought after three days' persistent shopping—when the weather bureau announced clear skies and the day lived up to the prognostication. Under the circumstances—the pin still unmatched—Elise knew it would be utterly ridiculous to return home to

marry Hugh. Therefore she wired him to come to New York to marry her.

This was a plan which heartily met with Hugh's longing; but it so happened—the officers of the bank having inconsiderately left town—that the cashier was obliged to stay by the wreck in order to show the receiver how a financial institution should not be conducted.

When Elise returned a week later—with three band-boxes and a gross of hat-pins—she found a storm waiting for her at the station, and Hugh installed under her mother's roof. He blandly explained that he had moved in his trunk that he might be on hand the first clear day.

Hugh was roused from his sleep that night by a flash of light. For a moment he stared stupidly into a lantern, then asked the masked person behind it whether he would be so kind as to turn the glimmer from his eyes.

The visitor complied with this request and in return solicited Hugh's pocketbook.

"You'll find it in my trousers. They're hanging from the top of the bookcase. I'll be obliged if you don't disarrange them—they're pressing under the dictionary."

"*Pro forma!*" observed the burglar, extracting the wallet; "how extremely particular you are."

"I confess I am. You know, it's the crease in the trousers——"

"Oh, this is the *coup de grâce!*" interrupted the thief sadly. "Eleven dollars and seventeen cents. My account is eighty-seven sixty-three, waiving interest."

"Your account?" Hugh cracked his thumb to be sure he was not dreaming.

"Yes, sir, my account! I'm not in error, I hope. You are the cashier of the Thirteenth National?"

"I was!"

"I thought so," exclaimed the other with satisfaction, as he draped himself over the footboard; "in fact, I went to considerable trouble that I might be positive upon that point. I have the misfortune to be one of your

depositors. My business with you is to collect my balance."

"But I'm not responsible for the failure of the bank," retorted Hugh, sitting up in bed and threatening the depositor with a finger.

"I have not accused you of that, sir; but since it was you who received my deposits, I look to you to return them intact. Come now, I have no wish to resort to violence, but it is imperative that I should have my balance tonight."

"You've touched me for all I've got—unless," ventured Hugh, struck with a brilliant thought, "you'll take a cheque!"

"I did not come here merely *pour passer le temps*," expostulated the burglar. "This is no hour for levity. I must have real money; and as it would appear that you speak the truth, I must insist that you negotiate a loan with some member of the household!"

"Now, look here, Mr.——"

"*Sile, et philosophus esto*," commanded the depositor, flaunting a revolver in Hugh's face. "There are your slippers! *Allez!*"

He steered the cashier out into the hall. "Who occupies that apartment?" He pointed to a room at the head of the stairs.

"The revered lady who tomorrow expects to become my mother-in-law—provided the weather's clear. I'd rather not strike her for a loan—at least not yet!"

The depositor rubbed his chin thoughtfully with the barrel of his pistol, and remarked sympathetically: "I appreciate your delicacy. We'll try elsewhere!" They passed down the hall. "Ah!" exclaimed he, turning his lantern on a door brilliant with a football poster, "who is domiciled there?"

"S-s-s-h!" cautioned Hugh; "my fiancée!"

"How piquante! We might go farther and fare worse. No doubt she is amply provided with funds."

"I don't think so—she's just returned from New York!"

"Still, it will do no harm to in-

quire." The burglar laid a hand on the door-knob.

"You forget, sir," Hugh interposed; "she's a young lady. It wouldn't be right to go in there without a chaperon."

"I—I beg your pardon," exclaimed the other, quite embarrassed. "I hope you will not think me devoid of respect for those conventions which are the bulwark of our social etiquette. I am glad you recalled me to a sense of the proprieties. By all means let us have a chaperon."

"Not her mother," insisted Hugh.

"Then one of the servants."

"They discharged the chambermaid yesterday. There's only the cook!" Hugh grinned maliciously at the depositor.

That worthy person, however, being an amateur housekeeper as well as an amateur housebreaker, concluded that he would not disturb the cook.

After consultation they descended to the parlor floor with the idea that the depositor might select something from the household goods which would enable him to close his account. He was wavering between the choice of the grandfather clock and a Turkish rug, when he descried three band-boxes piled in the hallway.

"Ah!" he cried, "here we have something more negotiable." He uncovered Elise's purchases. "I have a fancy for this saffron-tinted, confectionery affair. Try it on!"

Hugh set the hat jauntily on his head and turned about that his visitor might get the effect of the long dangling ribbons.

"It seems rather *outré*," commented the depositor critically; "though I've no doubt it might appeal more to my daughter. What's the price?"

They found a receipt in the box.

"Forty-five dollars! How exorbitant!"

"Very reasonable, I should say," observed Hugh. "You couldn't find one like it in this town. Besides, look at the gilt label. That's worth ten dollars itself."

"I will consider," remarked the

burglar; "lay that aside. Let's examine this green one. I confess myself somewhat enamoured of those red rosettes. It would be tremendously becoming to my wife—more so than that white mushroom bit of millinery."

"You must understand," Hugh warned, displaying the hat, "that this scarlet trimming won't chime chromatically with my lavender pajamas. But with a purple tea gown, or a pink polka-dot Swiss, it would be simply scrumptious!"

"Don't try to influence me," objected the thief; "I'm quite capable of making up my mind for myself, thank you. However, I—yes, yes—I think that will do. What's it assessed at?"

They consulted the price slip.

"Thirty-eight fifty."

"Must be a bargain," suggested Hugh. "Probably a fifty or sixty dollar hat."

"I will not question the potentiality of your assertion," returned the other, "though the equity of the present figure is not above suspicion."

"But it's the very latest. My fiancée wouldn't have bought it if it *wasn't* up to date."

"That's just the point. Perhaps it was *en règle*, but *is* it?"

"Say, are you a college professor?" Hugh asked impatiently.

"No, I have not that honor; I am merely a tonsorial artist; but I am as particular in the choice of my words as I am of my razors or——"

"Your bank?"

"Ah, no; and hence the misfortune of being obliged to employ this ignoble method of recouping myself." The barber looked sadly at the millinery for a moment, sighed, and then computed: "Forty-five and thirty-eight fifty is eighty-three fifty. My account, without interest, is eighty-seven sixty-three. You have already furnished me with eleven dollars and seventeen cents *à compte*. Therefore I am your debtor to the extent of seven dollars and four cents." He counted out that amount and handed it to Hugh. "There, that closes our account. You,

of course, will settle with the young lady!"

"Oh, yes, I'll do that!"

"Now, before I depart," said the depositor, as he tied up the band-boxes, "I want it thoroughly understood that this matter is entirely *entre nous*—that you give me your solemn word not to trouble me hereafter; or I shall insist that you pay me in cash on the spot, which would mean that we'd be obliged to rouse your prospective mother-in-law."

"We're quits, all right," Hugh assured him. "Your family may wear the hats in peace. I owe you something for your consideration of my personal feelings and your respect for—er—mother and—er—her!"

"Well, I flatter myself that I'm a gentleman. Under the circumstances I regret that it would not be considered entirely *élite*, or I should offer you my card. Still, let me assure you, if we should meet again under happier auspices, it would give me great pleasure to shave you." The tonsorial artist held out his hand and added, "You understand that this," referring to the boxes, "is simply a matter of business. *Absit invidia!*"

"Of course!"

"*Tempus fugit!* I must be going!" The barber insisted upon repeating the handshake. "*Bon soir!*" He picked up his newly acquired chattels and started for the back of the house.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Hugh. "I'll let you out the front door."

"You are most considerate, sir; and I thank you; but—though I hold superstition as a legacy from our less enlightened forefathers—I, nevertheless, deem it advisable to make my exit coincide with my entrance. So, with your permission, I shall depart via the kitchen window!"

As the parting guest flung a leg over the sill and dexterously juggled lantern, pistol and band-boxes, he looked up at the now scintillant heavens and quoted:

"The moon shines bright!—In such a night
as this,
When the sweet winds did gently kiss the
trees

And they did make no noise; in such a night,
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night."

"I wouldn't wonder," yawned Hugh.
They were silent for a moment.

"Will you have bay rum or witch hazel?" asked the barber absently.

"W-h-a-t?"

"I beg your pardon. I was thinking that it promises to be clear tomorrow." The tonsorial artist slid off the sill and opened the back gate. "*Dieu vous garde!*" he declaimed. There was a flourish of band-boxes and he was gone.

"Bon nit!" retorted Hugh nonchalantly. Then he locked the window, made his way to bed, and slept with the serenity of one who has no fear of the morrow.

With fond expectations, then, he faced his fiancée at the breakfast-table and regaled her with a jocund narrative of the night's adventure.

Elise, however, not only failed to see the humor of a transaction whereby she had lost her priceless millinery, but worse—she upbraided Hugh with voluble tongue, and among other undesirable qualities with which she endowed him was that of cowardice. If he had but made a pretense of resistance—had he but blacked the burglar's eye—all might have been forgiven. But no, he was a poltroon—he had suffered the thief to escape unbruised and now laughed at his own shame.

They were not married that day, notwithstanding that the weather was clear. It was patent to her that he was utterly incompetent to husband a young and lovely bride.

Hugh left the house like a drooping Cupid. Elise and the expressman did the rest.

In the evening mail she received a post-office order for eighty-three dollars and fifty cents. No note accompanied it. She was both piqued and disappointed.

When next Hugh saw Elise, she did not see him. She passed him on the

street, apparently interested in the cross-trees of a telegraph pole. After that the clerks at the bank remarked that the receivership was upsetting Hugh's placidity. However, he glued himself to his desk, so that by July the books were straightened out, the depositors paid nineteen and a half cents on the dollar, and the institution pronounced deceased.

In the meantime Elise and her mother had left town.

Hugh had no idea where they were, and, after making vain efforts to locate them, he told himself that their existence was a matter of indifference to him, anyway. He would not be miserable. He would be gay. He would accept that invitation to the house-party on the shore of the Chesapeake and make desperate love to the first attractive girl who had the temerity to look twice in his direction.

Rather sighfully he packed those flannels and gorgeous outing shirts designed for a mountain honeymoon, and journeyed forlornly to Silver-Bluff-on-the-Bay. His train was late and the coach later. So it was after midnight when he arrived at the old manor house, and he was glad to be shown directly to his room. He turned in, but the Sand Man was evidently busy elsewhere.

"It's this infernal heat," he growled, rising and looking out the window. It was moonlight. He could see through the trees that fringed the bluff the shimmer of it on the water.

"Looks cool out there," he reflected. He thrust his feet into a pair of slippers, and, clad only in pajamas, sneaked out of the house and shuffled across the lawn. There he fell in with a path which led him to a studio—its great north window frosted with moonlight—and close by, beneath the trees on the bluff's rim, he found a hammock. He stretched out in it lazily and, reaching to a bench to swing himself, he touched a soft, chiffon-like thing. He picked it up. It was a parasol, a diaphanous conceit, composed mostly of frills and obviously more decorative than useful.

"I don't believe it would even keep off moonlight," Hugh commented,

making an effort to open it. The combination was strange to him. He exerted his muscle. Then he wished he hadn't. The shade was in one hand and the nickel rod in the other.

He breathed a silent curse. "I'm in for damages!" He sniffed at the shade. "H'm, h'm! . . . Where have I met that perfume before?" He sniffed again. "Sure!" This with conviction "Elsie!"

He sat up and chuckled, but stopped short, staring through the low-hanging branches at a man creeping stealthily from the underbrush a dozen yards away. There was a big patch of light in front of the studio, made by the moon shining through an open space in the foliage. As the man stepped into this bright spot he presented to Hugh an unwashed countenance covered up to the eyes with a mat of sandy whiskers. Hair of the same emphatic hue asserted itself from beneath a bit of straw hat. The man's garments, unchromatically assembled, were in a condition which might be described as precarious. If the apparel proclaimed the man, he was a tramp.

"He's as lovely as a colored supplement," mused Hugh. "I wonder what's his game!"

The tramp indicated his intention by trying the studio door. Unsuccessful in effecting an entrance there, he turned to the north light; but apparently it, too, was fastened.

Hugh was intensely interested, though not in the least disposed to interfere.

"He's working hard for a night's lodging," thought Hugh, as he observed the tramp laboriously prying at the window with a huge cleaver. Presently the man grew impatient and shattered a pane with the handle of his knife. At that a cry, distinctly feminine, came from the studio.

The tramp answered it. "Hey, you, shut up!" he called in through the window. "If you yells ag'in, I'll kill you! Hand over you'se jewels!"

Hugh was on his feet. He recognized that this was very different from his experience with the burglarious de-

positor. Then he had only to reckon for himself; now a thug threatened a woman. He looked about for a weapon. He found it in his hand—the nickel-plated parasol rod.

"Clear out!" he shouted suddenly, advancing from beneath the trees.

The tramp turned sharply and glared at Hugh. A cloud, passing the face of the moon, obscured the light. Hugh fancied he saw a woman's face at the window, but the tramp, cautiously approaching with cleaver raised, demanded his attention.

Hugh unconsciously assumed the attitude of a fencer awaiting attack, and it was thus the moonlight, released by the fleeting cloud, discovered him. The light, like a calcium, played upon him, and the nickel rod, catching the glint of it, flashed like a polished rapier.

It attracted the tramp's eye. "Great Gawd!" he cried in terror, "the length of it!" He dropped his knife, turned and disappeared as though propelled by gasoline.

Hugh looked after the tramp in wonder. It was some seconds before he understood the cause of the man's fright. Then he looked down at the rod and laughed.

It was a serious matter, though, to the young woman who now flung open the studio window.

"Oh, Hugh," she gasped lovingly, "how courageous—you've saved my life!"

He posed there, after a Sothern-Zenda poster—with the air of one who nightly rescued maids in distress—and replied, plagiarizing the heroes of a thousand dramas, "'Tis nothing—a mere scratch!"

"But you were very brave," she insisted.

"Say no more about it, Elise dear!" This as though she had never called him coward.

She sighed. "I've a confession to make, Hugh. But first you must promise to forgive me."

"I forgive you! Confess!"

"I had you invited here!"

Hugh suddenly remembered that he wore his lavender pajamas and re-

treated to the shade of the sheltering palms.

Elise misconstrued his retreat. "Oh, you are angry!"

"No, no," he assured her.

"Then come here and kiss me!"

"Eh—pardon me—I can't!"

Then she wept. "Hugh, you mean to break our engagement."

"Never!"

"But why won't you?"

"I'm—I'm—c-a-c-a-c-a-t-c-h-i-n-g c-c-o-l-d," he sneezed. "My attire is neither warm nor decorous."

She laughed daintily. "Just a minute, Hugh, then you must get something—er—warm and come back and play guard . . . Are you there?"

"Y-yes!"

"What would you say if I were to ask you to start in fresh—reverse your conditions—marry me the first day it rains?"

Hugh's answer came emphatically from out the darkness: "I'll marry you tomorrow, regardless of meteorological conditions!"



CAUSE FOR SUSPICION

"SOMEbody broke into Locke & Key's hardware store the other night," said the landlord of the Pruntytown tavern, "and stole a couple o' razors, four or five revolvers, a shotgun, lot o' ammunition, keg o' blastin' powder, several butcher-knives and a broadax."

"Any clue to the burglars?" inquired the patent-churn man, who visited the hamlet often enough to be pretty well acquainted with its inhabitants.

"Well, no; no real clue. But they can't help suspectin' Lester Pinney—you know Lester?"

"Of course I know Lester—that skimpy, stoop-shouldered, henpecked little fellow! Pshaw! why, Lester Pinney is as honest as the day is long!"

"So he has always been considered—that's a fact! But he's goin' to be visited, latter part o' next week, by four brothers-in-law, all of whom differ with him on religion, politics and general principles, and the biggest one of whom has fits, or something similar, every time he overeats—which is whenever he goes visitin', I take pleasure in sayin'—and has to be held for fear he'll cut himself with the broken dishes; and their wives, who, among 'em, have elocutionary, or musical, or managerial, as the case may be, talent of no mean order; and their ma, a masterful, hawk-billed lady, built considerably like a rhinoceros, only not quite so much so; and their four, or such a matter, interestin' children, who are every last one of 'em highly talented and scandalously unlicked. It's a family reunion, and they are all goin' to come down on poor Lester like the wolf on the fold, or the water used to come down at Lodore, or both; and yet he don't seem to be in no ways put out about it. Of course this sort o' suspicion wouldn't stand in law, but with us that know Lester, and also his kinsfolk, it can't help but have its weight."

TOM P. MORGAN.



WHEN some women marry they lose their sense of humor—otherwise they would not marry.

FAR IN THE FOREST

By Madison Cawein

I

THE acorn-oak
Sullens to somber crimson all its leaves;
And where it hugely heaves
A giant head congested dark with blood,
The gum-tree towers, against the sky a stroke
Of purpling gold; and every blur of wood
Is color on the palette that she drops,
The autumn, dreaming on the hazed hilltops.

II

And as I went
Through golden forests in a golden land,
Where Magic waved her wand
And filled the air with dreams my boyhood knew,
Enchantment met me; and again she bent
Her face to mine, and smiled with eyes of blue,
And kissed me on the mouth and bade me heed
Old tales again from books no man may read.

III

And at a word
The wood became transfigured; and, behold!
With hair of gold
A presence walked there; and its beauty was
The beauty not of earth. And then I heard
Within my heart vague voices, murmurous
And multitudinous as leaves that sow
The firmament when winds of autumn blow.

IV

And I perceived
The voices were but one voice made of sighs,
That sorrowed in this wise:
"I am the child-soul that grew up and died,
The child-soul of the world that once believed,
Believed in me, but long ago denied;
The Fairy Faith it needs no more today,
The Folk-lore Beauty long since passed away!"

ON HAVING KNOWN A PAINTER

By Bliss Carman

PERHAPS we do not often enough count our friendships among our advantages, value them as we may. And when we reckon up the factors of our education, those stimulating and illumining forces which have made us what we are, we are apt to omit the subtle yet potent influences of our friends. We are not all as honest and thoughtful as Marcus Aurelius, who, at the very opening of his memorable book, acknowledges his indebtedness to the various persons by whom his character had been formed.

There are some men who know things instinctively, by genius, as we say, more than by training. But if one has no genius for a subject, the next best thing is to possess the friendship of someone who has. There is as much culture to be gained from having known a great artist as from having read many technical books about art; more, perhaps, since in the one case we learn with our whole heart and soul, while in the other we apprehend only by the cold light of the mind.

I feel so in regard to the man who first taught me to appreciate paintings and to love the splendor of color in nature and art. He had not a particularly apt pupil, but he had at least an admiring and sympathetic friend. If what I have to say of him shall seem cold it will only be because I wish to give a reasonable and simple sketch of the man as I saw him, a plain acknowledgment of a debt, unbiassed by personal enthusiasm and the heroic elations of youth.

He has become famous since I first knew him. In the early days of the last decade he was still busy fighting

failure, a master even then, but unrecognized, full of enthusiasm and the quiet fervor of the strong. I always believed in him, even when his talk of values and tones and keys seemed to me mysterious and oracular. His personality was what I cared for, the man himself, his character and his ways. Whether success has improved him or not would be hard to say. It could scarcely make him more interesting than he was. And I fear I must always remember him as the student, shaggy-headed, loose-necktied, with the daubed velvet jacket and pipe in mouth.

Last spring I went over to Washington to see him. He was spending a few months in this country making portraits, and was just then giving a week to painting a well-known writer from the West—who, by the way, has such a horror of New York, with its hurry and noise, that he could not be induced to cross the North River. The painter was using a friend's studio. I reached Washington on Friday, and was to be permitted to be present at the final sitting on Saturday. I called for the sitter at his hotel and we went round together after breakfast. On the way I learned that the painter usually turned up about eleven and worked until lunch-time. We were at the studio punctually, and I had time to look at the portrait before my friend arrived. A number of other people were there and we all had an air of expectancy, like a congregation waiting for the bride.

Presently he drove up in a stylish coupé and stepped forth, in appearance a typical man of the world, as-

sured of himself and his position, admirably dressed without the least ostentation, and with the casual, almost brusque traditional English manner. He greeted us pleasantly, though still with the same extreme English reserve of modesty, walked briskly into the studio, without wasting any time, slipped off his coat, picked up a cigarette from his silver case and lit it, took up his palette and brushes and began moving about rather quickly—quick in his movements, though deliberate enough in his purpose. He would screw up his eyes, after the privileged manner of artists, back off from the portrait and examine it critically, then turn and glance at his subject, who had not taken his pose but was strolling about the room talking to the other guests. Finally, after approaching the portrait and backing away several times, until I began to feel fidgety, he dipped a brush into the scarlet color and made a stroke or two at the top of the canvas, not on the face or figure at all. Then someone broke in with a question, and he turned away to join the conversation—a few casual words—so casual they were half lost in his beard, the cigarette still in his lips, before coming back to the canvas. Again he made a few more scarlet dabs, gave the whole thing a swift glance, laid down his colors and brushes and devoted himself to his company. I timidly approached the painting, to see what difference those few strokes had made. They made all the difference in the world. He had signed the portrait. I had been present at the final sitting.

For this labor, two hours a day for five days plus the trouble of the signature, our celebrity received considerably more than ten dollars a minute. If this seems to you an undue reward for art, let me remind you of a story told of this same Western writer, whose portrait was painted so swiftly and brilliantly. When some foolish woman, who had heard that he was paid a dollar a word for his poems, said to him how delightful that must be, he replied with his inimitable drol-

lery: "Yes, ma'am; but lots of days, you know, I can't think of a damned word."

So with my friend, the painter. If his hours seemed to be shorter than even a union would demand, no doubt it was only a concentration of energy, and he could accomplish more in his two hours than most men accomplish in as many days. Certainly he spared no pains. When I saw him briefly in London in '96 he was already working upon the decorations for a public building in Baltimore, which were not put in place until half a dozen years later.

As he himself once said to me, "It seems to be true that beauty, like the pearl, is a secretion of very slow growth. Even when a work of art seems to spring suddenly into being, as Minerva from the brain of All-Wisdom, it will be found that there has been a long period of gestation, of deliberate brooding and preparation. So final and complete a product as beauty is not to be attained at haphazard, by any mere fitful effort, however strenuous. Just as 'the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters' before the mighty miracle of creation came to pass, so the artist must muse on his theme before his lesser miracle can be performed."

Of course, he was speaking here of the veritable artist, the authentic child of inspiration, such as he himself was when I first knew him, without an atom of vanity or consciousness of authority. With all his indubitable genius he had the modesty of greatness—the sense of infinite power, no doubt, which made his own powers seem to him puny by comparison.

At another time he said: "I can't paint worth a damn," then tore the sketch into ribbons and began a fresh one, unperturbed even in his vexation and whistling to himself. He was aware of perfections which even his wizardry could not attain.

At times I fancied this same realization of the enormousness of his task filled him with dismay. But he was never profoundly despondent for long.

His buoyant spirit would rally to the work, with a natural and simple joy. It was as easy for him to paint as for a child to play in the sand.

He was not a dreamy boy, but rather practical and mechanically apt, with a passion for boats and water, and a genius for all sorts of woodcraft. This took him into the fields and woods whenever we had a holiday, and gave him knowledge of nature at first hand. But while he was a better woodsman than any of us, more wide-awake and self-reliant, he was also more thoughtful. His observation was not only quicker but also deeper than ours. Though anything but lazy, he would sometimes sit by a riverside for hours, apparently the idlest of beings, watching the bending grasses, the pebbly floor of the stream, the white, sailing clouds, and the birds with their bright eyes.

I often used to wonder what could so absorb him, but I can understand now that he was fascinated by the appearance of things, the shapes and colors and fleeting movement of the world, and was as much enthralled by the contemplation of beauty as ever was medieval saint in the meditation of holiness.

At school he was diligent rather than ambitious, and bore his education without complaint but without enthusiasm. The only studies which seemed to arouse his zeal were geometry, which he could "do like a streak," as we said, and Latin—Cæsar and Virgil. Cæsar he liked for the description of his bridge-building, Virgil for the passages about the clouds traversing the sides of the mountains, and both, because of the photographs of the Roman forum which the headmaster used to bring into the class-room. For the rest he suffered his teachers with the grave fortitude of youth and filled the fly-leaves and margins of his books with more creatures than ever came out of the ark. Whenever one of these delightful drawings particularly suited his own fancy, he would smile and say, "Isn't he a dandy?"

For such frivolous idling he often

came under sharp reproof, being easily caught at his engrossing occupation, and not infrequently was invited to stay after hours and display his powers, so many feet of blackboard to be covered with drawings before he was at liberty to go home, and the masterpiece to be left for the teacher's inspection the next morning. That was cakes and pie for him; and our amazed eyes would behold of a morning wonderful scenes in chalk, towering cities, and battles, and men and women of all degrees, perhaps one of our own homes or the unmistakable portrait of some local character; until the powers that ruled over us, being men of sound humanity, recognized the futility of warring against the gods and allowed genius to have its way. Instead of sending him to college, they contrived that he should go to an art school in Boston.

It was a memorable day in October when we bade him farewell at the station, for we felt a share in his glory. The next summer, when he came back, for his first vacation, he was somewhat changed, of course, in bearing and manner, though the same at heart. He went about, along his familiar streams and meadows, as before; but now he always carried a small painter's kit, and you might surprise him any afternoon working fervently over some bit of landscape. Very often his subjects seemed most uninteresting; you never would have picked them out for studies; yet somehow they appeared picturesque enough after he had finished. Of course it was simply that he came to them with an unprejudiced eye; he thought only of what he saw, and not at all of the use or association of the object. An old, dilapidated cow-barn, if its lines and sagging roof composed well—as he would say—with the apple trees behind it, was more beautiful to him than any of our fine new residences. Certainly nothing could be much more hideous than the buildings of the mansard roof period, though we did not all know that at the time. When we asked him why he didn't make a pic-

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ture of the new city hall, a four-square abortion of red brick with slate roof, he said he didn't know, only somehow it didn't appeal to him. That was his quiet way; he never fretted, nor scolded, nor abused; but if he didn't like a thing, you couldn't bring him up to it with ox chains. A sort of serene determination possessed him, which was not quite obstinacy and was more powerful than the heedless exuberance of most men.

It was only when he worked on his sketches that the fires were unbanked in the man's deepest nature. Then he had all the warmth and tensility of a sizzling engine under a full head of steam. He worked like a fury. A dozen landscapes in a week was only play for him. He seemed to be caught up in the divine frenzy which we had heard attributed to Michael Angelo and the Pythian priestess. He would seat himself before his subject and instantly seem to undergo a sort of hypnotic transformation. A secondary nature seemed to spring into control, quite unlike the everyday man we knew; a thousand times more alert and energetic, with a purposeful earnestness that did not belong to him at all, as a usual thing. His eyes brightened and his face glowed, like the visage of a minor prophet under the glory of a vision; his glance traveling from subject to canvas, from canvas to subject, directing the deft hand at its delightful labor of creation; every motion incredibly swift and exact for one whom we had always known to be so leisurely. I suppose the truth is, his being was awake, aroused by the magic call of opportunity. All his earlier life his great powers had been slumbering, simply because they had never encountered the sort of work they were so peculiarly fitted to perform.

His zest and satisfaction in toil were a refreshment to behold. His occupation was his greatest pleasure, and every hour for him was touched with splendor and romance. Many men are cheerful about their tasks; he was positively radiant. I remarked on this to him one day.

"Oh," he said, "that is only natural. Every man is happy if he can find his own work. Men are miserable only when they are warped and deflected from their legitimate tendencies, and forced to do what they never were fitted to do."

Where he picked up this philosophy of his I don't know, but it seemed to serve him very well. It certainly kept him happy, and what more can you ask?

So the summer passed and he went back to Boston for his second winter. I did not see him again for several years. Meanwhile, he went to Europe on some sort of a traveling scholarship; spent his winters in Paris and his summers in Normandy; and came back a confirmed disciple of the open-air impressionists.

I was living in Cambridge then, when one day I received a note from him asking me to call on him at his studio somewhere out in the Back Bay district. I lost no time. My knock brought him quickly to the door. Cordial as of old, he grasped my hand and pulled me in. There he stood, bearded and browned now, but gracious as ever, quite unspoiled.

"Just the same old man," I said.

"Oh, yes!"

He smiled and pushed me into a chair.

I was so glad to see him, to have my friend back again. Then my eyes wandered around the room. It was a shock that sobered my exuberance. The walls were covered with marvelous escapades in daring purples and incomprehensible blues. Where I should have expected a soft gray shadow on a brown road, I was offered a smear of blue across a streak of red. Even an old gray barn was blue; the old stone walls of the pastures were blue; everything was blue—when it wasn't red or yellow or green.

"Whose are these?" I ventured politely.

"They're mine," he said.

I was too diffident and considerate to exclaim, but too astonished to do anything with the silence that fol-

lowed. However, he knew I made no pretense of a knowledge of his art.

Presently he asked: "What do you think of them?"

"Well, they're certainly striking, and—and novel. I never have seen anything like them. What do you call them? What style are they?"

"Oh, impressions. Out-of-door things. Light and shade studies in color, you know."

I was still so evidently nonplussed that he went on:

"You see, they're painting a great deal in this manner now. It's the style of Monet. Have you seen any of his things? No? Oh, but you should. They are worth while. You must come with me and see them."

The next afternoon I was introduced to the Monets. It wasn't a very cordial meeting. My friend noticed my constraint, but it only seemed to amuse him. After awhile I could stand it no longer.

"It's all very well, old man," I said, "but what in time does it all mean? Why paint things as no one ever saw them with mortal eye? People have been going up and down the world for a good many years, but no one ever saw colors like these. Who ever heard of blue rocks in the middle of a pasture? They can't really look like that to this man?"

"I fancy they did," he said, "though, as you say, people have been going up and down the world a good many years without seeing these colors."

Evidently I was in the presence of a new educational influence, so I held my tongue, determined to keep an open mind—but also fully convinced that the walls were hung with rubbish, and profoundly dejected over my friend's aberration.

All that winter I was gently induced to cultivate an acquaintance with Monet and impressionism, and all the time I was beset by many misgivings. Prejudice was dying hard, but my sight was being continually filled with these brilliant colorings, and gradually I became accustomed to them. They began to look less strange, and even

satisfying. One day at an exhibition, as we were looking at a landscape of the old school, with a good deal of black mixed in the pure color, and clouds as hard as pasteboard, I was surprised to find myself quite in sympathy with my friend when he made an inarticulate sound of sickened disgust at the daub. I began to feel I was improving.

Then one day in June came the revelation. We had gone down to the shore together for a holiday. The fields were green with young summer; the day was fair and bright, as it can be in New England then; we strolled up the road between the old lines of stone walls overhung by orchards, and overgrown by white flowering elder and wild rose. Presently we crossed a field, a bare pasture under the open sun, strewn with numerous great boulders.

"There," he said; "what color do you call those stones?"

I looked at them hard.

"Well," I said, "Bigotry never had me in her train. They certainly are blue, I must confess. What is the matter with the light? They never looked so before."

"They always looked so before," he said, "only you never used your eyes. Your vision was demoralized by false ideas, by preconceived notions of color. You never before truly looked, and asked yourself what you saw. The eye, if left to itself, observes only as much as it needs to use, and lets the rest go. All these impressionist pictures you have been seeing this winter have aroused your attention and stimulated your curiosity; so that now you come to view things with a freshened sensibility. You see them as they are, that is all."

I have never seen them differently since. They are much more beautiful than formerly—those old stone walls of the New England pastures, with their fair magical bloom of blueness. It is as if they had been endowed with an air of immemorial grace, a glamour of romance, a palpable atmosphere of the story which is really theirs. They

are invested forever now in my eyes with a new loveliness, a revelation of the glory of the earlier world untarnished by the breath of time.

On the same day, as we tramped back to our depot at sunset through a pine wood, my first lesson in color was repeated and reinforced. I saw that the boles of the pine trees in that light were not of a dirty shade of brown, such as we might have chosen from our childhood's paint-box to depict them with, but were actually of that dark yet living purple which my friend had used. Again I was pleased with a new delight in sheer color, and felt liberated, enriched and ennobled by the sudden splendor of unexpected beauty. It was time to give thanks once more for all the loveliness of the gracious earth, so inexhaustible, so passive, so unregarded, waiting only for our dull eyes to be opened under the spell of art.

It was thus that I came to understand very slowly one of the great uses of art, its power to emancipate us from our lesser selves, by opening the doors into unimagined worlds of happy experience. That science should do this

for us had long been a familiar idea. The young student is permitted to behold, with each new subject that he approaches, vast regions in the realm of truth, whose aspect is strange and fascinating to him, of whose very existence perhaps he had been unaware. Into these great and half-surveyed dominions of knowledge, where so many of his devoted fellows have perished in their zeal, the youthful enthusiast may go down and toil, sure that his labor will not be lost in the final account.

That there are like regions in the realm of beauty, unappreciated all about us, I had hardly realized. Yet it seems that this is so—that there are spacious domains of perception to be entered at will by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and the loving heart to comprehend. Into these countries of delight it is part of the delectable business of art to lead us. To have been permitted to behold one of them even from afar off is a privilege for which I shall be grateful more and more while life lasts for me and the entrancing wondrous pageant of the world goes by.



WHERE CROSS-ROADS PART

GLAD roads of spring—O lanes of laughing May,
As fleeting as the shadow-clouds at play
With sunbeams rife upon the grassy green;
O golden lanes—through roads that lie between,
Amid what darkened sweep lost I the way?

Or was't the stripling youth, whose roundelay
Awoke the echoes of the throbbing day
And changed to gladness all the world's demesne,
Glad roads of spring?

Apart I stand, distraught with lone dismay,
No more youth's gladsome biddings to obey,
No more with him love's strewings lost to glean;
The hills of years now ever intervene,
And bid me say good-bye to you for aye,
Glad roads of spring!

THOMAS S. JONES, JR.

THE SWIFT SHIPS

By Mrs. Henry Dudeney

THERE was no candlelight in the bar of the "Albatross." A winking half-light best suited the mood of the villagers who sat close together on the benches.

And then the night was so hot. It was the yellow time of the year, when long days panted and dusks sank groaning into the arms of the waiting West. Yellow time in the year 1838! Round ricks fat in the farmers' yards! Harvest wellnigh over, and only unkind stubble left in those fields where lately had waved the tall grain—growing pale at the thought of a sickle.

No one wanted a light in the bar of the "Albatross." Chins were peaked forward and eyes sparkled oddly enough in foolish rustic faces. All these neighbors had fierce young beards and dirty smocks. It was Friday night; Friday, of all the seven days, stood for declared degeneracy. Saturday was the village time for shaving, and on Sunday morning every man clumped to the parish church in his stiff, clean smock.

When ten o'clock struck each villager made for departure. The landlord followed the suggestive group to the threshold. His white apron, tied about a sleek, round body, made a ghostly patch. Behind was the bar, with the empty blue mugs and the smell of beer and smoke and sawdust; before was the placid night—pasture lands and arable stretching under the youthful moon; the green sea lying motionless.

"Theer's bin a plenty o' pore, good chaps sent ter Van Diemen's Land for firin' rickses," spoke the host in a friendly and oracular way. "Though I'm not fer denyin' thet this 'ere new-

fangled machinery *do* come heavy on the workin' man."

He looked at no one in particular as he spoke, but he gazed out blandly at the unwinking sea.

"Machinery's agen God A'mighty's mysterious ways. Scriptor don't tell on it, an' I'm one as goos by Holy Writ," shouted Miles Penycoke mockingly.

He was the youngest and handsomest of the party. He was the leader. They all savagely swelled with some secret scheme, but the dark conspirator air, heavy about them all, was densest round him.

"Many has wasted acrost the seas in Van Diemen's Land," insisted the landlord. "Now have a care, friends an' neighbors all."

His warning was unheeded. They all laughed boisterously at prudence as they clumped away down the cobbled street and, parting at the corner after various pregnant jerkings of heads and thumbs, took their various ways.

Miles Penycoke hastened up the lane that led to Cider Mill Farm. In this lane stood the thatched cottage where lived the Widow Winterflood with her granddaughter. He leaned over the garden gate and gave a peculiar whistle; one of those sounds, meant only for the beloved ear, that often enough stir the country night. He waited and Ada came swiftly down the path. She seemed to slip from the house door to the gate in a kind of terrified ecstasy. She peered into his face—as if she dreaded to read sentence. He took her hands; his own told their feverish tale.

"Miles," she said fearfully, "what's come over you? Let goo, dear; I'd as lief grip a live coal as your flesh ternight. Miles—you—you ain't a-goo-in' rick burnin'? The whole countryside's up wi' these yere rick fires."

"The thump-a-thump o' thet cursed threshin' machine at Cider Mill is devils in my head yet," he groaned. "An' hay cut by machines an' all—it do simter break a chap's heart, it really do."

"It'll goc by," said the girl soothingly. "It'll goc by; these 'ere new-fangled ways is on'y a passin' fashion, Miles."

He shook his head. He knew—of course he knew; these poor, passionate opposers of Progress in every age read their doom very clearly. Machines come to stay.

"Grown an' bearded men ain't goo-in' ter be starved out o' house an' home, Ada."

Through the warm night she marked his fiercely working fists.

"Miles, Miles, you sha'n't leave me till daybreak. Lay you down in the shed, dear; theer's nowt but one old settin' hen in the far corner. I'll lock the door on you. Grandmother's abed an' asleep since eight. She'll niver know nothin'."

They had been leaning over the gate, breast to breast and eyes drinking. Ada now quickly stepped out and put her arms desperately round her lover.

"You sha'n't goo. I've bin at the winder since dusk a-waitin' an' watchin'. I knowed there'd be summat up ternight. It's Friday, too—the devil's day, so some says. You can't git away." She laughed and cried and shivered because his face was getting blacker. "You dursn't hit me!"

He shook her aside.

"Look you 'ere, Ada, we don't want petticoats a-mixin' up wi' man's work. It's all this 'ere young 'ooman on the throne what's made the mischief. Good King Garge, nor the Sailor King neither, 'ud niver 'a' guv' in ter machinery."

The girl looked at him. She had dropped back against the gate. He had reached that point when pleadings

and caresses were merely a lash to savagery.

"I can't on'y say my prayers fer you, Miles," she said forlornly. "I'll say 'un double ternight, an' likely the dear Lord 'ull hear."

He looked on her more kindly. She was so pretty; her beauty and her helplessness and the sense of debt to her pierced through his desperate passions. Ada Winterflood was the usual incapable and enchanting village belle—long, lithe neck, pouting lip of a vivid scarlet, a large and languishing light eye

"I won't run foolhardy inter danger," he promised.

"You owes me thet," she said, suddenly clasping her hands together.

"Who telled you o' rick burnin'?" he demanded, with an abrupt change of voice.

She ran her fingers in the plaits of her pink gingham bodice before she answered:

"It wur Willyam Parfitt. He says as theer wur talk o' firin' the ricks at Cider Mill Farm, an' you an' Walter Wadey an' young Stan Hillyar wur mixed up in it. They goos about wi' a band, these wild chaps what burns the rickses. You—you plays the cornet, Miles."

He did not speak; only looked moodily at her scarlet, trembling mouth.

"Willyam Parfitt is blacksmith ter Sir Thomas Devereaux now, Miles—blacksmith on the estate. He earns a good wage. The gell he weds 'ull fare soft, like a lady."

"Then you'd best take 'un, Ada Winterflood."

"Thet's what grandmother's allus a-sayin'. She do let on so about Willyam Parfitt. But theer's nowt fer me but matin' wi' you, Miles."

"I can't keep a wife. This 'ere machinery'll starve a man out o' the village he wur born in."

In answer she held out her bare and rough left hand.

"This weddin' finger mustn't bide naked much longer, Miles. You—gied me your solemn word."

He laughed—fond, triumphant, savage.

"I holds you tight, Ada—Willyam Parfitt or no. Theer, don't weep. You're allus a-weepin'—at kind words or rough. It breaks a man's sperrit—sech a lot o' water. Ef things goo well we'll call the banns a Sunday week. I'm bound ter be movin' now. Wur thet the quarter-past struck?"

"You'll step straight back ter your lodgin', as you loves me, Miles?"

He only gave her a kiss—hard and hot. He went away, laughing.

Widow Winterflood was up and about early next morning. It was Saturday. She baked bread and pastry on that day to last well over Sunday for herself and Ada and the young man lodger, William Parfitt. Nothing must be done on Sunday. She walked across the field to church with her prayer-book folded in a clean pocket-handkerchief; for the rest of the sacred day she sat and spelled at her Bible.

She was so early that it was hardly daylight. The only other thing awake was a little flying lark, with a shrill voice, all rapture and pleading.

The oven was hot, the wood embers raked out, the loaves and pies most merrily baking, when the garden gate creaked and young Miles Penycoke cast an air of license over the garden. There was a cornet under his arm and he was drunk—with something more than liquor. The grandmother came out and surveyed him. She stood at the door, her bare, veined arms folded on her fallen breast. Miles came staggering up. At the house door he shot out his foot and kicked the grindstone that stood near. The widow had a double grindstone on one spindle, and he wasn't sober enough to recognize this homely thing. It took on the abhorrent seeming.

"Ter the devil wi' machinery!" he shouted, and then, in an orgy of merriment, pushed by the old woman into the house.

He pulled the iron door from the oven and let it fall rattling to the floor. There was such a cheery, warm smell of baking. Loaves were rising proudly; pie crust taking on most delicate tint.

Miles, laughing, stumbling, cursing, clattering, raked it all out and scattered and tossed it about his feet. When the last loaf fell and the oven stretched back gaunt and despoiled, he dropped down into a windsor chair. His hat was off, his arms were hanging, his smock blackened and torn; his face, red and foolish, was convulsed with mirth. He laughed and laughed. Peal upon peal rang in the rafters and sent the cobwebs swinging.

The Widow Winterflood stood over him. Her face was malicious and scornful and elated. Jael might have looked like that—when Sisera stood weary at the mouth of the tent.

She hardly regretted her bread. A batch of bread was well lost on this occasion. Miles Penycoke was at her mercy. Why, here was power and here was victory, and here was a sure prospect of ease for her old age! She might now doze away her remaining years in the chimney corner, with great-grandchildren about her knee. She was old enough for great-grandchildren to be her dear ambition. Ada would be Mrs. William Parfitt, with a nice young family about her.

"I knows you, Miles Penycoke, fer a swearin', drunken young runagate," she said solemnly at last. "Aye, an' a burner o' other folkses' property. An' Van Diemen's Land, as I've heerd tell, is the fittin' place fer sech."

Van Diemen's Land!

It sobered him. He straightened his shambling body, he struggled to his feet. He stood—in the tense attitude of a soldier. He gazed on his avowed enemy. He knew very well what the widow meant. He was suddenly most horribly alive to his danger. He reflected, sick and cowardly, on that midnight scene at Cider Mill—the burning ricks, the great flare in the sky that had spurred them all on. The mad night died; the wild and happy blood turned sluggish in his veins. He had lived his one perfect hour. The reckoning approached. Why had he come here—drunk and muddled and full of amorous desire to tell Ada his tale of victory! The other chaps were snug

in their beds by now. And he! Well, here he stood.

"I holds you here, Miles Penycoke," said the dame, stretching out her palm, which was dry and white with flour; "I holds you in the holler o' this yere hand."

"Sure!" he admitted plaintively. "You holds me, Gammer Winterflood."

"An' I'll hev you sent acrost the seas as sure as my name's Mercy Winterflood—Mercy Moulding I wur as a maid. My gell Ada shall hev peace at larst an' 'ull turn her thoughts ter honest courtin'. I can put a rope, ef I chooses, about the neck o' yourn."

"Like as not," Miles returned listlessly.

Outside was the sweet, free, the open world—and yet he dared not go.

"The swift ship shall carry you acrost the seas," continued his enemy, lifting her hand and raising her voice and taking on the dignified attitude of a prophetess. "The swift ships—see the Book o' Job; second lesson larst Sunday at Morning Prayer. The swift ship 'ull carry you ter Van Diemen's Land—as sure as I wur borned a Moulding an' married a Winterflood."

"Van Diemen's Land!"

Ada's voice made the echo, and she followed it with a loud, ugly scream as she fell on the kitchen floor. She had come down late and sluttish—soft shoes and a half-hooked bodice; Ada would always be incapable and captivating. She smelt the loaves. She saw the cornet. It glittered on the bricks, a brazen thing. She looked at her grandmother and became convinced of tragedy by the very attitude of that ancient woman. And then, before any word broke to her sleepy brain, she saw Miles, with his stiff body and his dreadful face.

II

It was harvest-time once more. Ada walked in her grandmother's garden, the soft and shapeless baby slumbering on her arm.

Yellow time once more! Every-

thing in Widow Winterflood's garden was yellow—to match the peaceful ricks in Cider Mill yard at the top of the lane. No one had again burnt the ricks at Cider Mill this year. There were sunflowers in the garden, that had sprung from small beginnings and now topped the fence; flaring marigolds that garnered all the glory of summer to blazon on their faces; little pansies wizened with long blooming—pansies striped and splotched that looked out from a riot of overgrown things.

The baby, so weak and sweet, sighed in its sleep. Ada sometimes looked out from the garden to stare forth at the great solemn sea that hardly stirred; that bore on its breast—just as she bore baby—the pure white ships. The swift ships! They passed across and beyond; they dipped away. They went over—to Van Diemen's Land. And then the sea went down, too—down and down. That was a most dreadful thought.

The gate opened and William Parfitt came singing in. It was dinner-time. His eye sparkled at sight of Ada, and there was added to it a martial gleam at the sight of her burden. He went up and put his arm round the mother and—after a struggling pause—bent to peep at the child.

"Well, it's Monday noon, Ada, and our weddin' day Thursday," he said gaily.

"You're too kind ter me, Willyam. I ain't worthy."

She looked full in his ardent face with her large and empty eyes. There was a frightful emptiness in Ada's eyes of late.

"You're all as I wants. Not many men can say they've got their fill o' joy," he returned, looking up at the flecked and sailing sky.

"But I gives you nowt, dear Willyam—on'y—on'y this."

She pulled the shawl from the child's head and cried—loud and unchecked.

"Ssh, my dear. You wur allus sech a one fer tears. You've a soft heart, Ada."

"Miles said as I wur made o' water, he truly did believe," she said, lifting

a corner of her apron and smiling fondly as she wiped her eyes. "You—you ain't heerd news o' Miles, Willyam?"

"The larst tale wur as he fell overboard on the way ter Van Diemen's Land. We'll hear no more o' Miles Penycoke, Ada." The blacksmith could not quite cast forth the triumphant quaver in his voice.

"Then you an' me must bide about alone, my pretty," she said mournfully to the child.

"Don't let on so, my gell. I'll take you both in here." William, smiling, put his hand quite simply to his heart.

He timidly touched the child—making a poor joke:

"'Tis a small enough chap. His keep won't be much."

"He's but puny yet." Ada raised her burden to heaven. "But he's ter fight when he's growed up, ain't you, sweet? What was it, passon said Easter Day, Willyam? You stood godfeyther. I wants the very words."

"'Ter continue Christ's faithful soldier unto his life's end," quoted William solemnly.

"Yes, them wur the words," she said peacefully. "You've told me times an' often, but I forgits."

After a pause she added, lifting her voice:

"Grandmother spoke crool hard. She said thet afore iver the little baby wur made a Christian or I went ter be churchd I should ha' stood by good rights in the porch wropped in a white sheet, fer penitence. Thet wur the old ancient way, and her mother, Ruth Ellen Moulding, knowed a single 'ooman what done it!"

"Mrs. Winterflood's bark's worse'n her bite," said William heartily—but with a shadow on his face.

"I thought I heerd Miles whistlin' larst night," she said, looking vaguely at the sea and growing very pale. "I could ha' took oath ter it. An' I puts the woolly shawl round baby an' goos over by the cliffs. I'm bound ter foller the whistle, Willyam."

"Ef you're minded fer dinner, Willyam Parfitt," cried Mrs. Winterflood

shrilly from the back door, "I've dished up ten minutes an' more. The dumplin's is settin' in their own grease. Ada, bring thet little dear out o' the noonday sun an' lay 'un on his bed, pore, misfortinit child!"

III

MILES was whistling. Now tomorrow was the wedding day. *Today* was the wedding day. There was the church clock striking a dreadful twelve. It was Thursday by now—not Wednesday any longer. And yet Miles—no wedding guest—stood whistling outside.

"The graveyard 'ull be full wi' ghosts," muttered Ada as she tied her bonnet and then lifted the baby from the blankets. "But they'll not hurt we, my innercent. An' Miles—Miles—dear." She unhooked the lattice and looked forth and whispered huskily into the night. "You won't be gooin' near the church or near the noisy sea."

But it was to the sea he led her. Up the lane and across the cliffs—to the very edge, the cruel and ragged edge of vast waters, that dear whistle of his floated before. Ada peered through the blackness for a sight of him. It was strange to hear Miles whistle and yet never to see his mouth.

"I'm a-comin', Miles, comin'," she called out, stumbling and hurrying and clutching at the child and sometimes looking in vivid terror behind her.

He whistled very gaily. Dear Miles! Always in good spirits.

"He must ha' clean forgot rick burn-in' an' sech. Like as not he niver heerd mention o' Van Diemen's Land," she said confusedly. "Why, he's dead, fer sure. Willyam Parfitt said so. Ain't you dead and gone, poor Miles? God wipes the eyes o' them what dwells in your country."

He whistled and whistled. He would give her no peace until she came. But why would he go so near the sea? He must, sure, be walking on it, like the Lord Jesus.

She stumbled along. She brushed

into the dark and prickly furze bushes and caught her gown, until it was jagged in many places by the trailing brambles. She couldn't bear to keep him waiting.

"I'm comin', love, as quick as quick. An', Miles, I've brung the little baby."

The Widow Winterflood woke William Parfitt very early on his wedding morning. She rapped imperiously at his door. He told calamity in those knuckles. He hastily dressed and went out.

The old woman leaned at the wall. She was shaking all over. Her scant gray hair was hanging; she had pitched her garments hurriedly about her gaunt body. The blacksmith hadn't conceived before that even an old woman could be so ugly as she appeared.

"Ada ain't slep' in her bed," she told him, "nor thet dear lamb neither. She've bin an' took thet pretty child inter the deathsome night air. Get you down ter the shore, Willyam. Lately she hev made sech a start about Miles Penycoke whistlin' acrost the seas. Many a time she's gone roamin' an' I've woken up at the click o' the latch an' got her upstairs, unbeknown ter you, an' gied her a sound cloutin'. Lord grant she ain't drowneded, the daft gell!"

They went together down the stairs and into the kitchen.

"I'll light a bit o' fire agen you're all back," said the grandmother.

William was hurrying through the garden. He could have struck each heartless yellow flower. Mrs. Winterflood came hobbling after him.

"Not a word ter the naybors," she said anxiously. "My family's allus kep' respectable—Mouldin's more'n Winterfloods fer thet matter. Theer's bin gossip enough a'ready over Ada's slip. Bring her home quiet an' I'll hook her inter her weddin' gown an' rock the infant off ter sleep."

William went down to the shore, descending the cliff by those irregular steps shaped by fishermen's feet. Those were the days when Queen Vic-

toria was young and maiden on her throne. Today there is a sea wall.

He went down to the sea, that had so often taken toll. It was a white morning—white for bridal; white crests to the little waves, white in the sky, white cliffs—cruel white were the cliffs as they curved round the bay.

He went down to the sands, looking for his daft love and feeling sure that he would find her.

She was at the foot of the cliff, just where she had fallen.

One sight of her told its awful tale. William arrived by instinct at the history of this tragedy. He could almost see her taking that last, fond, blind step into space. He could imagine the moment when she felt her foot touch—nothing! But likely she had never known.

The child was held tight to her—very tight. The little head was quite hidden. That desperate grip of hers round the small unwanted creature turned the blacksmith sick and jealous. He felt, even at that moment, his quiet, his unconquerable aversion to the child. He remembered that once, in a triumphant hour of sin, he had wished it dead—and now perhaps he would never be forgiven. He covered his eyes.

There was a step behind. He looked nervously round and saw one who should have been dead—or at least captive. So in any case there would have been no bride for him! The approaching man was Miles Penycoke.

They met. They looked at each other. They looked at their poor heap of shattered womanhood—that lovely body, so rudely treated by the jagged cliff, by the great stones.

They did not go near. Each man felt that he never could.

They did not speak. They were struck into silence; the truly great moments do this. Each man's eyes fixed on the other man's mouth—tight, silent mouths, expressing much more eloquence than the most passionate speech.

There would be long days left to talk in—silly wet days when men cannot work out of doors. There would be

long years, to explain, condole, regret, weep, reproach—and perhaps fight through. They might fill up their empty lives with emotions, rank and luxuriant. William Parfitt felt all this in his simple mind, with the few homely words at his service. He could feel all. He could think. There seemed such plenty of time. He wasn't sure whether the days to come would find him sworn foes with Miles—or not. Like as not they were designed to live brotherly under one roof.

Miles spoke at last. He was parched and bloodshot and gray with August dust.

"I've tramped ivery step o' the way. I wur minded ter jine a man as goos in a sailin' ship wi' cattle from Bristol ter Jamaiky. But it wur borne on me to see her fust."

"The tale went round thet you was dead, Miles Penycoke."

"I dropped over the side o' the ship. A fishin' boat picked me up an' a wo-

man kep' me close fer weeks in a loft. Folks is thet kind. I've hid by day an' walked by night ter git here. An'—an' this is all I finds."

He stretched out his hands to Ada, but he never went near.

"They'll take me ef they finds me."

He glanced up at the beetling cliff. Certainly there were feet and voices above.

"I'm come from Bristol," he whispered, "an' I dursn't stay. I'm like Cain of old—all hands agen me."

"Get you gone an' save your skin, lad."

"But can't I do nowt? What's befell to my pore Ada? Theer's a regular tramplin' above, Willyam Parfitt."

"You'd best be gone," returned the blacksmith quite tenderly. "Sims as ef," added he to himself, and looking at the gay check of Ada's shawl, "my heart 'ull be tore clean out o' my bosom afore this day's work's done."



JUST AS EASY, IN CHICAGO

MRS. ASHE—My husband didn't like the dress I put on the other night.

MRS. DASHE—What did you do—change it?

"No—changed my husband."



RESEMBLED THE GIVER

GERALD—I hope the watch I gave you for your birthday will always remind you of the giver.

GERALDINE—It certainly will; it looks all right, but it won't go.



ANY man can prove to himself that he is a martyr. But few men can prove to the world that they are heroes.

THE LAST HOUR

By Zona Gale

NOW the days are all gone by.
 I am old who feared to be.
 And they say this shell is I
 Left among them echoing—
 Shell that dreams of sunken things,
 Ghostly shell that thrills and sings
 With the surging of the fever
 Of its old rememberings.

What is that which I would save
 Out of all the wreck of hours?
 What take with me to the grave
 From the pyre of flame and flowers
 That was life? As, here a bloom,
 There a brand to heal the gloom
 And to yield to shadowy fingers
 The lean tribute of the tomb.

I will take no half-delight,
 No half-sorrow; and no shame
 Masking in the robe of Right
 With great Beauty's outraged name.
 No love that has not withstood
 All the fury of some flood
 Strong to bear the two who breast it;
 And no tears that were not blood.

Something I will take that deals
 Truly with the thing it is;
 Something that is real and feels
 Its defeats and victories.
 Say, a wound of honest red;
 Say, a foolish heart that bled;
 Out on them who play at living
 And usurp the honest dead!



A TEST

“WELL, it isn't everybody that can stand prosperity.”
 “No; it's like matrimony.”

THE SIGN-PAINTER

By Guy Bolton

“MY dear Gilpin, you seem to have acquired that execrable American way of striking two lines through the initial letter of success.”

“What would you have?” I defended. “Everything points to the advantage of maintaining one common standard. To cry out against the measure of the dollar sign is worse than bimetallism.”

Widdecombe clasped his hands and gazed upward appealingly. “And this is the man who has worshiped with me at the shrine of the Sistine Madonna and overtopped my rhapsodies on the Dutch portraitists. Alas! Art with a capital no longer. Advertising with capital—that’s more in your line now; eh, friend Gilpin?”

Such was the measure of his gratitude. After carefully “working things” for weeks, I had at length secured him an order for a series of street-car advertisements, that would net a larger profit than he would make from his paintings in two years—unless the selling rate of these homing exhibits was considerably accelerated. And now, having hastened to his studio bearing the good news and some details concerning the hole-proof hosiery to be illustrated, I was met with bare thanks and scornful declension.

“Has there been a sudden boom in Widdecombes?” I gaped.

The artist shook his head smilingly. “That Widdecombe on the easel, for instance—the old chap that ordered it says he won’t take it unless I make some alterations; so, of course, I know it’s an artistic success. The

most satisfying achievement to which an artist can attain is to paint things that dissatisfy his patrons.”

“Repeated indulgences, however, would make the satisfying of the artist’s appetite something of a problem, I should think.”

The painter raised a protesting hand. “Out on yon carnal worldling! The satisfaction of a well-lined paunch is one we share with all the creatures of the entire Darwinian scale. Why not go the whole hog—appropriate Chicagoism!—and hold, with the Chinese, that man’s soul is in his stomach?”

“But, Widdy,” I protested, my philanthropic intentions dying hard, “you did the design for ‘What is baby’s bath without Budd’s Talcum Powder?’”

Widdecombe covered his face with his hands. “Can’t a poor devil sow a few wild oats without having some moral botanist come pulling them up and shaking the roots under his nose? Oh, there is no denying I did ‘What is baby’s bath?’ but then it was such a little baby! Besides, that was two years ago. I’ve been living an untainted, reputable life ever since.”

On this I sighed at the evident hopelessness of my task, but in the moment of relinquishment a light broke on my consciousness. “Widdy,” I exclaimed, “there’s some girl who has been putting these ideas into your receptive little noddle. Yes, your nose—that straying blush proves it—you’ve got another girl.”

“Hist!” he said, gazing furtively over his shoulder. “Don’t yell like that!”

I glanced inquiringly round the suspiciously tidy room, and then fixed his eye severely. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," I said.

He bridled virtuously. "I was afraid you would disturb the young lady and her mother who have the studio in front," he explained with some excess of dignity. "Those transoms open right into their place."

"That's better," I said relievedly. "None of your bohemian camaraderie. But I should think what you tell me would be all the more reason?" I raised the product of the Intrawoven Knitting Company to complete my question.

"I'd like to, old man." Widdecombe drew up his chair and laid a hand confidently on my knee. "I'd really like to, but—ah—she"—he jerked his head toward the transom—"she has ideals on art."

"Widdy, Widdy!" I groaned. "A girl that has a club-foot, or a glass eye, but a girl that has 'ideals on art'!—and for an artist, of all men—*O tempora, O mores!* And does she do anything toward embodying her theories, may I ask?"

"Yes, she is a miniature-painter; but that hardly gives her a good chance, you see. She says that her ideals are too large for miniatures." And after a pause he added, by way of completing the domestic picture: "Her mother has been knitting a pink shawl ever since I've known them."

"I should like to be introduced," I said. "I might convert—or would you have me say pervert?—the young lady to a more lenient view of the advertising world."

Widdy shook his head dubiously. "One of her ideals is a country where all branches of advertising are extinct except philanthropy. But I'll be glad to take you in there—only, say, Gilpin, this is *entre nous*, eh? You know what most of the fellows are like in a case of this kind."

I couldn't resist saying, "Well, you should know," as we crossed the hall and rapped at the door opposite.

"Come in," came our response; the

voice pitched in a well-chosen cadence on a minor third.

Widdecombe obediently ushered me into a studio, the—effeminated—counterpart of his own. There was the same fish-net clinging to the ceiling in irregular loops. Several scattered divans smothered with cushions attempted to give the large room a suggestion of furnishing; while I recognized one of Widdecombe's own pictures in the midst of a throng of drawings bearing the attenuated signature, 'Ella Valeria Tripp.' A young woman, bent low over a table by the window, was the only occupant of the room. She did not turn around at our entrance, but explained detachedly that she was varnishing.

"You know you can't stop a minute, but I'll be through in not much more. You must amuse yourselves by looking at the pictures," she concluded playfully.

"Delightful," I said. "I came in here to see your work, not to interrupt it, Miss Tripp."

"The best way to become acquainted with an artist is to study his art, as you are no doubt aware, Mr. Gilpin; but perhaps mother will come out and play the showman if she is not still lying down. Oh, mother!" she called.

"Yes, my dear, I am coming," responded an asthmatic voice from the half-open door of the inner room, and a moment later the voice made good its promise in an overwhelming visibility.

"Oh, it's Bertram," she said, puffing across the floor smilingly, with a shock of pink wool clasped into the crease in her black gown that did duty as a waist.

"I've brought in my friend, Mr. Gilpin, to meet you, Mrs. Tripp," explained Widdecombe, as the lady sank creakingly into a wide armchair. "He has never been fortunate enough to see any of your daughter's miniatures."

Mrs. Tripp's smile slowly revolved in my direction. She indicated a chair near her own.

"Are you an artist, too, Mr. Gilpin?"

she asked. "No? Well, I guess you are to be congratulated. Poor, dear father was an artist, so I know all about it, you see. It is from him that Ella gets her talent, though I used to draw, too, as a girl. I still have one of my best things—a pear and some nuts in a glass dish, all drawn and shaded in charcoal." She raised her voice: "Ella dear, you don't know where that pear is, do you?"

"Yes, mother," responded her daughter, with the soothing intonation one uses toward the childish mind, "but you can't offer one pear to two men, can you? I think there are some social teas, though, and I'll make tea as soon as this is done."

The old lady sighed and resumed her knitting. "I meant my drawing of the pear, dear; however, I remember now we weren't able to find it last time Mr. Brewer, the sculptor, was here. You must know of Mr. Brewer," she continued discursively, picking up two dropped stitches. "He has quite a tombstone trade—I suppose I should say clientèle—hooded figures of grief bearing urns. There are several examples, I believe."

I was saved the burden of a reply by the timely interruption of Miss Tripp herself, who arose and held out a long, graceful hand. Whatever proportion of her artistic abilities came from the distaff side, it was evident, for Widdecombe's assurance, that no metamorphosis could be expected to amplify her into any resemblance to her mother. She was now a slim, buoyant figure, with a pre-Raphaelite profile and a prehistoric frock, the faded pattern of the latter considerably brightened in patches by simple, unstudied smears of multi-colored pigment.

"Did I hear you say you are not an artist, Mr. Gilpin?" she pleasantly inquired, timing the change of subject, most happily, with the re-swathing of her last miniatures, in the praise of which my stock of polite superlative had flowed, trickled and dripped—dripped to exhaustion.

"I was; but like Cable's Catholic, at least not a good one. That is my ex-

cuse for turning renegade. I'm in the advertising business now."

"Oh, dear, then he is our friend the enemy, isn't he?" she said, turning to Widdecombe. "I belong to the 'Society for the Suppression of Household Advertising,' you know."

"You can't claim me an enemy in the high art controversy. I am strictly on the fence," I smiled.

"Well, I believe I would give you tea even if you were a bill-poster," she gaily returned, bending over the little samovar. "But in that case I should feel it my duty to poison your cup."

"I see your free-thinking tendencies, as regards the modern gospel, cause you to disbelieve entirely in signs," I said.

"Have you a match?" she questioned, turning to Widdecombe. "Well, perhaps I am prejudiced, Mr. Gilpin; but I don't speak altogether gratuitously. We had the studio next a Mr. Rugg before we came here, and in him I studied the advertising artist at close range."

"The creator of the 'Piebald Pickaninny,'" explained Widdecombe.

I waved aside his parenthesis with some impatience. "There is only one Rugg, I believe; and there, Miss Tripp, you touch on one of my enthusiasms. But I protest that it is not fair to describe a man by the standard of an early work. The piebald pickaninny showed promise, but it was young—"

"I thought all pickaninnies were young," murmured Widdecombe.

"I mean as a work of art," I explained with some dignity. "He hadn't then attained to the robust fulness of some of his latest alliterative successes. He seems to have been particularly fortunate with P's—for example, the two chaste figure designs in 'Packard's Porous Plasters for the People'; while even his harshest critics are forced to admire the powerful contrast in 'I use a Peerless Potato-peeler' and 'I don't.' You must have seen it. Two interiors are depicted, the one squalid and dirty, with ragged, crying children on the floor; the other all bright, rosy freshness, telling in

its warmth and its comfort of a home hallowed by the 'Peerless Potato-peeler.'

As if to emulate the cheeriness of this last tableau, the kettle commenced singing busily; and we drew around the little table.

"Mr. Rugg must make lots of money, I suppose," wondered Miss Tripp. "How much sugar, Mr. Gilpin?"

"Stacks and stacks. Beg pardon? Lord, no! only one lump of sugar. I was speaking of Mr. Rugg's income."

"And will you believe it?" said Widdecombe, stirring his cup, "this advertising devil has been around showing me all the kingdoms of the earth that may be mine if I but consent to become a follower of Rugg."

"He wants you to do piebald pickaninnies?" cried Miss Tripp, aghast.

"No, I was to begin on hosiery. He thought the delicacy of handling which the critics were kind enough to see in my work at the fall exhibition just fitted me for the job."

Mrs. Tripp, who had lapsed into such a state of cat-like serenity that I had been momentarily expecting her to purr, claimed an extension of the simile by proving that she napped with an ear open. She stirred rather restlessly, and I caught a Grundy gleam in her eye.

I hastened to reassure her. "One might suppose from Bertram's manner that a boudoir scene was the thing asked for; but I assure you it was nothing of the sort. Grannie could be shown, with her basket of mending in her lap, just laying aside a pair of folded stockings with the remark, 'I don't even have to look at those; they're "Intrawoven Hole-proof."' The keynote of the picture, Arcadian simplicity combined with artless suggestion. Why, Miss Tripp, if you are not too busy you might perhaps like to do the work yourself."

"Me," cried the miniature-artist, in ungrammatical protest at the suggestion, "a sign-painter?"

"Oh, well," I replied, "don't let me influence you into taking such a step

without due meditation. The work, as you see, is one of self-sacrifice, but—if I may be permitted—also of rare nobility. Art culture among the classes—that is our aim. The poor have the Metropolitan Art Museum, and the artists themselves have their exhibitions at the Art League. But the respectable people, who can't afford to be seen at such places—these are the ones we are trying to reach. The nude in art has always made them uncomfortable, but we are educating them to at least a tolerance of 'Venus Arising from the Sea,' through the medium of the bill-boards."

"Your arguments are ingenious," said Miss Tripp, "but if sound, they should be capable of a wider application. I never heard of a clown who practiced buffoonery to educate his audience to an appreciation of Shakespeare's comedies. However, you and I will not, I fear, make much progress discussing the ethics of your profession. My ideal is the ideal of the Municipal Art Society—no advertising anywhere, not even in the shop windows; the fences all painted a restful green and a few good dry-points in the Elevated trains instead of the 'Piebald Pickaninnies' and the 'Hole-proof Hosiery'!"

I arose and paid my respects to Mrs. Tripp. "I'm afraid I must look further afield for a new recruit to our army of workers," I said, turning again to her daughter. "Good-bye, Miss Tripp."

"Oh, I'm coming in to look at Bertie's picture," she replied, leading the way into the adjoining studio. "I always like to see it in that late afternoon glow."

"What is the thing called?" I asked Widdecombe while he drew the easel round where the light from the west window could fall on it.

"Life," said the young painter modestly, as he stood aside to admit of our inspection.

Miss Tripp placed a palm at the side of either eye, in a manner suggestive of a horse's blinders. She stepped forward and then back; held her head at

an angle, and at length pronounced: "It's coming, Bertie; it's coming!"

"You think so?" queried Bertie, with admirable dubiety.

"I *feel* it," she responded, laying a hand on her bosom. "A little more *grisaille* in this corner close to the dominant note in a charming *diminuendo*——"

"Well," I broke in, not allowing her opportunity to draw breath for further expression of her "feelings," "I am afraid I must really say good-bye. A business engagement—and you will have to forgive me for introducing so inharmonious a topic. I hope the next time I see your picture will be at the exhibition, Widdy."

"Thanks, old chap; and by the way, if you hear of anyone who wants some book-cover designs done——"

"Your distinctions are so fine," I complained. "If this had been a blue-stocking, you would have done it."

They laughed. "You had better ask Mr. Rugg," said Miss Tripp, with a suspicion of scorn in her tone. "Good-bye."

I did not see Widdecombe again until the exhibition, to the private view of which he sent me one of his allotted half-dozen tickets. It was early when I entered the gallery, and but few people were about. I easily spied Widdecombe standing in front of his own picture, and I walked up to him. As soon as he perceived my approach he moved a little farther along and pretended to have been looking at the painting next his own.

The necessary word of congratulation over and his question concerning comparative prosperity in the advertising world answered, I ventured to inquire for Miss Tripp.

"She's well," he said. "She will be here in a few minutes. I was to meet her near my painting—that's the reason I was standing here."

"Exactly, exactly; but how are things progressing?"

Widdecombe looked carefully around and then lowered his tone confidentially. "I'm going to ask her to-

night, old chap—now the picture is hung, you know."

"It isn't sold," I returned rather dubiously.

He stared at me for a minute as though I had insulted him. "Even if it *shouldn't* sell, you don't suppose that would make any difference to a girl like Ella?"

"Of course not," I said hastily. "To the artistic nature——" and we drifted away from the topic presently on a tide of mutual reminiscence, coming at length to a discussion of the relative abilities of some of those choice spirits with whom we had linked arms in the old Beaux-Arts days.

"The chaps that have settled here——" said Widdecombe; "nice young fellows, but as artists——" He pursed up his lips and shook his head. "We'll go around and look at some of their things presently."

At this moment Miss Tripp entered the room and walked up to the picture with scarce a glance at ourselves. I had not realized it before, but she was quite stunning. Perhaps it was the olive-green velvet suit or the big chinchilla muff. There was certainly a new sparkle in her large gray eyes as she laid a hand for just a moment on Widdecombe's sleeve.

"Bravo, Bertie!" she said, "bravo!" And his gaze met hers with a look as though only she and he were in the world. I coughed slightly to remind him that this was, unfortunately, not so, and Miss Tripp extended her hand to me.

"How are you, Mr. Gilpin?" and "isn't it splendid?" she said.

"It is, indeed," I returned; "but I think you should have a share in the congratulations. I understand many of the ideals expressed are yours."

She looked up quickly, with evident pleasure in her face. "You noticed the *adagio* notes in the middle distance?" She lowered her voice. "Isn't it wonderful the way he understands just what I mean when I try to tell him my feelings about his work?"

"Very, very wonderful," I said fervently.

As we strolled round the gallery I asked, in the course of conversation, if she had seen anything of Mr. Rugg lately.

"Oh, yes," she replied; "I met him again soon after your call, and I asked him to come over. He runs in to tea quite often, and I'd like to get you up to meet him some time."

I expressed my conventional delight at the prospect; but a couple of cross-purposed engagements headed us off, and I left without any definite engagement being made.

I threw considerable emphasis into the "good luck," with which I squeezed Widdecombe's hand in parting, and indeed, I thought, as I waited for the check clerk to sort out my cane, what a handsome couple the two young artists were going to make. "If he only had a penny or two!" I sighed.

It was but two days later that I found the same idea had occurred to Widdecombe himself. He was sitting alongside my desk, when I returned from luncheon, impatiently swinging his wide slouch hat.

"I was passing, and just dropped in to see how you were getting on," he explained. I told him I was glad he had waited; commented on the weather and in a minute he was giving me the real reason for his call.

"You said once you knew a publisher—slightly—who might be able to give me some book-cover designs?"

"Why, yes," I said, rummaging for my address book. "Judging from your evident desire to make money, I hope I am to congratulate you."

"You needn't," he said rather brusquely. "She turned me down—that is"—he hastened to soften the harsh impression—"she reminded me of what I ought to have remembered—that I am in no position to talk of marriage. I thought it over yesterday, and that's why I'm here."

I nodded my head. "We'll have to see what can be done. If you'd only consent to do a 'Use Washine' sign," I said, noting the order on my desk—"Adds years to a woman's life." That is not advertising—that is philanthropy, Widdy."

"It's a combination of the two, and I'll leave that to the millionaire college-founders. No, don't talk to me about advertising—it reminds me of that fellow Rugg."

"You have met him, then?"

"Oh, yes; he is up at the Tripps' quite often; generally comes in a handsome and has a way of saying 'we artists' that is simply damnable. Miss Tripp wants to know if you will come around and meet him, though—" He named a date.

I pondered a moment. "Tell her yes," I said. "I am curious to see him."

It was not to be, however. A sword was evidently laid between Rugg and myself. Someone—I could not quite make out who—had an influenza and for another month I was left to wonder if the cloud—with a veritable silver lining—which at present darkened my friend's affairs had yet begun to lift. Living in a rubious atmosphere of advertised Utopia, I felt so little was really necessary to launch a young couple down the ways into the waters of domestic bliss. The aforementioned potato-peeler, a "Self-sufficient Gas Range" ("All *you* do," as the advertisement says, "is to watch it cook"), and a package of "Magic Pastry Raiser" ("Baking day: holiday")—not much more would be needed for the Widdecombes, as I already called them.

And then one afternoon, when the first suggestion of coming spring set smiling faces on everyone except our head compositor, Widdecombe walked into the office. I feared, at the moment, he must have become a head compositor too, though he arranged a smile for my greeting.

"Yes, yes, quite a stranger," he answered rather wearily, as he took the indicated chair. "And I expect you will think I only look you up to ask favors of you."

I inquired as to the book covers.

"I did a few," he said, "and they turned out quite well, but I've come around now to ask if you have any advertisements I could do."

"Advertisements?" I gasped.

He nodded.

"You quite took my breath away for a minute, but I shall really be delighted to give you some of our orders. So Miss Tripp has relented?"

He looked at me a moment without speaking; then he said: "She is engaged."

"You are engaged?"

"No, she is engaged—to Rugg; the 'advertising artist,' as she now calls him."

I stared dumbly in the face of my friend. He seemed to be taking a sort of bitter pleasure in my surprise.

"But she told me, at least twice, that she wouldn't be a 'sign-painter' for any consideration."

"She says she is not going to be a sign-painter; she is only going to darn a sign-painter's socks."

His expression baffled me. I saw that sympathy, even in its liquid form, would be out of place. I did not know what else to offer him.

He stared moodily out of the window at the shadow-hacked strips of sunshine in the high-walled little street.

"At first," he said, "I meant to paint a picture like Dick Heldar—that would let her see what I could do without her; but I saw after a little while that it wouldn't touch them, really. So I've thought of something to beat that; I'm going to be a Rugg, too, only a better—or do I mean a worse one?"

Ah! Then—his expression meant revenge! I turned over the order slips on my desk.

"There is an order here," I said with some hesitation, "that would be a pretty big thing for you if you could catch the full meaning of the subject. You know Rugg's famous 'Mirthful Mourner,' advertising the spirit-raising properties of 'Hustle'—that old breakfast food, invented last year? Well, this order is from the 'Matutinal Manna' concern, to get up a similar series, and parallel all the 'Hustle' people's ads—'make 'em look sick,' as the manager writes. You know my enthusiasm about Rugg's work; but if you could just get the subject inside of you—it's pretty hard——"

"And very, very dry," he said. "On the whole, I think I'll try to do it without getting the subject inside of me. Don't fear. It's going to be good. I'll emulate Dick Heldar, after all, Gilpin, old boy; and 'Matutinal Manna' shall be my *Melancholia*."

I was soon to learn that this was no idle boast. It did not take Widdecombe long to get his wares on the market, and in a shorter time still they were attracting an attention that outstripped my most sanguine expectations.

The "Hustle" concern, perceiving the drift of things from their sales-book, instructed Rugg to give the public a shaking up. The veteran did his best and for a short time we gloated on the prospect of a unique and exciting struggle. But we reckoned unaware of the heights to which Widdecombe could rise. He literally outclassed the master from the first, achieving that rare combination, a great artistic and commercial success.

His motto for the nursery table, "Manna, then Manners," was in everyone's mouth in close accompaniment with the redoubtable breakfast food itself. The expression was even so fortunate as to provoke a serious ethical controversy conducted in the arena of the press by those well-named adversaries, "Consistent," and "A life-long admirer of your paper." It then crystallized into a music-hall joke; shortly after which it was of course referred to in the sermons of eminent metropolitan divines.

Congratulations met the young artist on every side, but I noticed his smiles were very transient and sometimes labored. It told me that his love for Ella Tripp had not been one of those fitful passions which had been wont to engage him in easily forgotten follies for half a season. It had left its sear in his hardened face and restless, discontented eyes.

At the annual ball of the Fakirs the last scene in our little drama was enacted—the Fakirs' ball, that always gives me a chance whiff or so of the free air of my own student days in the Quartier.

I had cast an eye round for Widdecombe when I came on to the floor, as a piece of news had been brought into our office that afternoon which was a very diadem on his newly ascendant star. I strolled across the floor to where I spied his figure, clad in white overalls, with two huge flat brushes stuck in loops in his belt, the square cap of Labor surmounting his high brow.

I soon got out my news. The "Hustle" company had thrown up the sponge—sold out. Here waggers forked the narrative, some declaring that the plant was to be used for a large sawmill, while others asserted that the Department of Agriculture had taken over the stock, after conducting experiments which showed that decaying "Hustle" had much the same fertilizing properties as granulated bone. It might not, as the advertisement claimed, "grow brains," but the Government chemists hoped it would grow onions. This much at least was certain, along with the main fact; it was a great personal triumph for Widdecombe, a great personal defeat for Rugg.

"And is Rugg here?" I asked.

"I haven't seen him."

This was rather surprising. I had noticed Miss Tripp explaining the meaning of some of the canvases to a man of a very unusual appearance, whom I somehow had fancied as being an intelligent art critic; but I forbore a reference to what I knew was a subject of bitterness to my friend.

I felt some awkwardness myself in approaching the fair miniature-painter, but the assemblage was of such comparatively small proportions as not to admit of polite avoidance; so, Widdecombe having been waylaid for purposes of introduction, I went over and greeted Miss Tripp, who for the moment was alone.

She, at any rate, didn't seem to feel any strain in the situation, but smiled up at me and patted the chair at her side. I sat down and we drifted a few moments on a current of remark concerning the pictures, the dance, the

costumes; then, "How like Mr. Widdecombe to come as a sign-painter," she said easily.

Her coolness did not seem to be contagious. I gurgled an unintelligent response, saved by being also unintelligible.

"What a success he has made!" she continued, and I could have sworn I caught the breath of a sigh.

"Tremendous!" I exclaimed with wicked enthusiasm. "But if he must turn Faust, why not have turned before?"

"Yes, why didn't he?" she cried almost fiercely, my irony passing unperceived. "Of course, I know it was because I persuaded him his talent was not a thing of price. What does he think of me now, Mr. Gilpin?"

"I don't know," I replied simply.

"No, of course he wouldn't speak; but you're his greatest friend. You understand him." She looked at me anxiously as I remained silent.

"I see. You think it is vanity that makes me ask. Will you answer me, Mr. Gilpin, if I tell you it is love?"

I must have betrayed my astonishment, for she went on without waiting for my reply. "Perhaps I had better explain. I refused Mr. Widdecombe because I thought it would be years before he could offer support to mother and myself. But the fad for miniatures seemed to be waning—and then Mr. Rugg drove up in his hansom. Mother was so pleased."

Her story rang true. The unworthy motives which I had been ascribing to her shrank as I met the gaze of her clear, gray eyes.

"What a ghastly farce!" I said. "Only just too late."

"You see how it would look to Mr. Widdecombe if he heard my mind had changed with his change of fortune."

I stepped over her molehill, but pointed out the mountain. "And Mr. Rugg?"

"No; I haven't even Mr. Rugg now." Her face settled rather sternly. "I found out the other day by the merest accident that he has had relations for upward of a year with a chromo-litho-

graph concern. It was a horrid affair, and I won't dwell on it, but you see no self-respecting girl could tolerate a thing like that. I might have forgiven all if it had not been for the deception. He swore he loathed chromos." And it was with this piece of information that she left me, as a mild-looking Mephistopheles abruptly appeared and claimed the dance.

My own name was on her card for the lancers—the last number before supper—and as I waltzed thoughtfully around the floor an idea came to me, the arranging of which gave me a reputation as a bore that would take years of consistent brilliance to outlive.

My plan was simply this. I would go to Widdecombe and arrange for his joining our set in the lancers without letting him know who my partner was to be. I would wait until the "grand chain," and then, when I met Widdecombe's partner, I would literally waltz off with her, leaving my friends an opportunity that, if I was not mistaken, would be fruitful of the happiest results.

Prepared for mischance, I was delighted as the performance bent smoothly into the lines of the plan. Widdecombe's partner was a stout, plain girl, with broad-toed shoes and strong glasses. An almost uncanny perception had shown her that very little make-up was necessary if she came as an allegorical figure of Virtue. I am sure this lady distrusted me from the first; and when I seized her and bore her laughingly away from our set her mind, no doubt, reverted to the Sabines and other dark tales of abduction.

"I am afraid they will be offended," she protested. She was a great stickler for artistic finish, and deemed a sensitive conscience a necessary attribute of Virtue.

"I just *had* to have a turn with you," I said, "and I think they'll

forgive us." The music had, of course, stopped before I got half round the floor, and I saw Widdecombe and Miss Tripp, left standing alone on the floor, move off together with an awkwardness of bearing discernible even across the room.

Telling Virtue, whose glasses were but a poor assistance to short-sightedness, that our friends were nowhere to be seen, I piloted her down to the supper-room, where she showed a whole-hearted devotion to chicken salad that—had I been the lover she imagined me—would have filled me with the jealous pangs of an Othello.

It was just as I had come to regard the regular current of life as a series of short rests alternating with struggles around a crowded buffet, that she reluctantly sighed a negative in response to my question concerning her empty plate. "The overture is playing and we must go up to the floor," she said.

We proceeded thither through the exhibition-room, in which were ranked the Fakes, and paused for a moment before "An arrangement in gold and silver," in one corner of which was a small and almost indefinable head, the rest of the canvas being occupied by a gigantic butterfly bearing a dollar-sign on his bulky body.

While we stood there a couple came round the end of the rank of canvases, and Virtue had out a half-dozen apologies before I had fully realized she was addressing Widdecombe.

Miss Tripp's eyes sparkled where the light fell on her moist lashes. She slipped a hand into mine. "Mr. Gilpin, you're a brick," she said.

"No, no," I protested, "that compliment is due 'Matutinal Manna'."

"It would be a suitable one," she laughed, and then added with a pretty color, "but Bertie and I are going to have it every morning for breakfast."



THERE are three ages of woman—men, children and gossip.

EXPERIENCE

A WOMAN passed along the highway. She was young and beautiful—so beautiful that all who met her stopped and marveled.

"She is lovely," said one, "yet there is a lack of something."

"It is experience," the other replied.

The woman heard. "I will buy some," she said, turning toward a stall where things of that nature were kept. On the shelves were many jars, labeled Innocence, Wisdom, Truth and other equally precious merchandise, but the jar labeled Experience was empty, and the merchant sought to give her Advice instead.

"Experience is dear," quoth he, "and Advice will answer your purpose just as well; besides, it is much cheaper."

But the woman had read the legend, "Beware of substitutes," so she went forth, and entered another stall, which was kept by a man of great antiquity, who shook his head when she pointed toward the coveted jar.

"You cannot know how heavily it weighs," he said, "or the price thereof. Pray let me give you a little Wisdom."

Having made up her mind, the woman replied that it was Experience she wanted, and that she would take a pound.

The antiquarian sighed. "Are you sure you have enough to pay for so much?" he questioned.

"I have Youth," the woman faltered.

The shopkeeper looked at her more keenly than before. "Youth alone is not enough. Youth may buy Wisdom——"

"I have Innocence," again she faltered.

"You must give me both," said the old man sternly; then, turning to the shelf he lifted the jar.

"Strange," he said to himself, "that although so many call for it, few return to make a second purchase."

Pressing her parcel closely, the woman went her way. In a little while she returned.

"I have tasted it," she cried, "and it is bitter. Give me back the price I paid."

The antiquarian shook his head. "I cannot," he said, "but I will exchange it."

"For what?"

"For six grains of Wisdom," he answered slowly.

And the woman took them, and wondered at the price.

FRANCES THOMPSON.



LOWER THAN HE THOUGHT

HE—Have I lost my place in your estimation?
SHE—Not at all. You have merely discovered it.

BELOW STAIRS

(To J. I. B.)

By Gouverneur Morris

I—THE THIRD FOOTMAN TO HIMSELF

W'EN hall the winter snows 'ave gone
Aw'y to w'ere they hall belongs,
I stands beside the window wide,
And 'ears the birds hall singin' songs.

I sees the Heaster bonnets go
Like 'angin-gardens down the street;
I 'ears an' sees awhile—and, lo!
I marks the dustpan at my feet.

I closes down the window then,
An' marwels at this world hof sin,
W'ich plys such gimes on 'umbul men,
As spring without, an' 'ell within.

II—STUBBERFIELD TO HIS BROTHER IN ENGLAND

'ERE, w'en I'm arsked to mike the "drinks"
For gruveling millionaires,
I mikes them, but, w'ile miking, thinks
Hof 'appier haffairs.

I thinks of Hingland w'ere I've seen
Hintoxicated hearls
A-dancin' on a Hinglish green
With bloomin' Hinglish girls.

I thinks of 'ow the Hearl of Kew
Fell on 'is noble 'ead,
An' 'ow we 'elped 'im, me an' you,
Into 'is noble bed.

It's different now to wot it was,
But Stubberfield don't turn
From wot 'e's told to do, because
'E 'as 'is bread to hearn.

THE SMART SET

'E mikes the "drinks," but still 'e thinks
 Hof 'appier haffairs—
 Hof Hinglish *pegs* and Hinglish legs
 Hin coils on Hinglish stairs.

III—THE THIRD FOOTMAN TO HIS SOUL

W'EN Stubberfield do cuss and blow
 An' shike 'is bally fist at me,
 When Halgernon is crooul—oh,
 I turns my thoughts to Hemily.

I thinks the servants' corredor
 Is 'eving w'en she nods to me,
 An' hall my troubles flies before
 The bloomin' smile of Hemily.

I've kep' my temper an' my plice
 For 'er sike in this 'orrid land;
 For once, w'en I was in disgrace
 With hall the 'ouse, she 'eld my 'and.

Since wiges is not fast enough
 An' Jimes 'as wrote an' bade me come
 To 'im in Nome ('e sez it's rough,
 But there is gold, 'e sez, for some),

I 'opes to p'y 'er 'arf I owes,
 And if I strikes p'y dirt in Nome,
 To set 'er like a bloomin' rose
 In Hingland, in a 'appy 'ome.

IV—ALGERNON TO STUBBERFIELD

I SEES you come from Master's room;
 The tears 'is hin your heyes,
 An' hall the 'ouse is plunged in gloom
 An' sorrow an' surprise.

O Stubberfield, O Stubberfield,
 'Ow are the mighty sunk!
 By 'arf a tun o' Châteaudun
 They'd 'adn't orter drunk.

They've hopened hof your trunk an' found
 A lot of bally things—
 The matter hof a 'underd pound
 An' 'arf a dozen rings.

O Stubberfield, O Stubberfield,
 Your fall is 'ard to see,
 For I must fice your empty plice,
 An' wot you was, must be.

You'll never get another plice,
 You're like a busted pane,
 An' wot you was, you bally cuss,
 You'll never be again.

O Stubberfield, O Stubberfield,
 Shall we lament your fall,
 Your empty plice, your wanished fice?
 My 'ero—not at hall.

For you was not perlite to us—
 Too 'igh you 'eld your 'ead;
 An' if I meets you in the streets
 I means to cut you dead.

V—STUBBERFIELD TO HIS GOD

I DON'T know w'y they've been an' did
 Wot they 'ave gone an' done;
 Nor I can't s'y 'oo took the quid,
 Nor w'ere the liquor's gone;
 Yet I believes that 'oo an' w'ere
 Is one, in Halgernon.

'Is forrid 'as a wiper look
 That gives 'is tung the lie;
 'Is nose is like a gallows 'ook,
 'E cannot meet the hey—
 An' yet it is for such as 'e
 That 'eros 'as to die.

Wot Stubberfield 'as ever shook
 Before a fatal shot?
 Wot Stubberfield 'as ever took
 Wot Stubberfield should not?
 If any, look at Stubberfield
 An', lookin', tell 'im wot.
 Look well at Pinner Stubberfield
 An', lookin', answer—*Wot!*

VI—STUBBERFIELD TO HIS SOUL

THERE is a sort of hangel grice
 About a certain lydy's fice,
 And I must arsk her nime.
 She is the little scullery maid
 'Oo 'erd the lies an' up an' said
 As I was not to blime.

'Er hey was to the key'ole laid,
 'Er feet was soled with felt, an' made
 No hekös in the 'all.
 She seed the wiper Halgernon,
 She seed wot 'e was bent hupon—
 She looked and seed it hall.

THE SMART SET

She seed 'im 'ow 'e 'ad the things—
 The money, walubles an' rings—
 An' 'id them in the trunk.
 'Is willainies the hangel spurned:
 She riz, an' down the 'all she turned
 An' like a hangel slunk!

VII—HEMILY TO THE THIRD MAN

SHE used to waship Corcoran
 Hin silence from afar,
 But now the heyes hof Mary Hann
 Be'olds anuther star.
 For Pauncefote Pinner Stubberfield
 'As arsked 'er 'ow she R.

'E arsked 'er 'ow she were an' drew
 'Er close agenst 'is breast;
 'E 'erd 'er 'eart a-thumpin' thro'
 The splendor hof 'is west,
 An' Pauncefote Pinner Stubberfield
 Said: "Weary hangel, rest!"

I tells you this, I shows you 'ow
 'E did wot 'e 'as done;
 I shows you 'ow them two is now
 One soal an' only one—
 An' yet you stands an' looks at me
 As hif I was a nun!



THE POINT OF VIEW

THE BEAUTY—I've had lots of poems written to me, both serious and humorous; but I've kept only the serious ones.
 THE OTHER GIRL—They were better than the others?
 "Oh, no, but they were much funnier!"



WANTED THE LATEST NEWS

JOHNNY—Have they found the North Pole yet, papa?
 PAPA—Why, no. Didn't I tell you yesterday they hadn't?
 "I didn't know but they might have found it since."

A REALIST

By Julia Lawrence Shafter

THE dining-room windows of the Aurelius Club overlook a public garden, and Ashton Barron, early in the year which preceded the publication of his great novel, "Jane Ford," was breakfasting at a small table set close against the panes, so that his beauty-loving eye might have something more ornate to look upon than the club furniture or the matutinal faces of his fellow-members.

It was a dark morning. The pavements were wet with fog, and the figure of Victory on the tall column in the centre of the square had lost her airy look of triumph and hung dripping like a naiad above the drenched shrubberies and grass-plots.

The benches were too damp for even the unfastidious loungers of the city parks to feel at ease on them, and the lawns, where so many of these soldiers of fortune lie supine in the sun on fair days, were now wholly deserted. The one figure in the "landscape"—for so Barron delighted to call this morning view of his—was a woman in a gray cloak, who was sitting on a little campstool near the curb that incloses the square, counting a bundle of newspapers in her lap.

Barron was a keen observer, an artist and a good craftsman; for him everything in life had a strong human interest, whether it were a flower, a woman, a dog or merely four granite walls inclosing a steel skeleton. He could invent histories for them all, or rather he could divine the truth within them; and to do this is to be, in some sort, a genius. No prospect, therefore, was without interest and significance for him; ennui and he were stran-

gers. He was constitutionally incapable of being bored, and, while his manner was not effusive, the vigor and freshness of his mind lent him a charm which all felt, little as they might be able to define it.

Seated opposite to him at the table was a man in whom intellect and optimism had not united. It is doubtful if a successful criminal lawyer can be other than dreary and misanthropical at times, and it was a standing joke between the two friends that whereas Barron always began the day with a keen relish for its possibilities, Farnsworth showed usually a sick distaste for what lay before him, and was wont to say whimsically that he wished he, like Barron, had nothing to do but write "pretty stories for the magazines."

It was his repetition of this well-worn jest which made Barron reply now, as he helped himself to another cutlet while his friend dawdled over an egg: "Why not collaborate with me, then? I tell you, 'Jane' is not going to be food for babes. It is strong meat, George, strong! Find me a heroine, and I will dedicate the book to you—with fond affection to my dear friend, G. K. F.—and send you a presentation copy with my autograph."

"But I supposed you had a heroine, and were well under way."

"I had! I am! But she is a creature of sawdust, not worth the paper she is written on. I shall throw the whole thing in the waste-basket and make a fresh start. The trouble is, George, I know too little about Jane; she has never come within my range of experience; I have never known her."

"Why not? What is the type? I can't, to save me, keep track of all your feminine creations."

"Jane is a new departure. She is an unfortunate, lovely, of course, and innocent—until temptation overcomes her. I shall begin with her when she is sixteen and finish her off, say, at thirty. She has committed a crime, a murder, and has been sentenced to prison for life, but is commuted, you understand; otherwise I couldn't marry her off to the hero, which I shall do eventually in a way to make the conservative reader shudder. A book of this sort must be written very carefully; a word too much or too little spoils the whole. Above all, my heroine must live; you must see her—her temptation, her crime; the prison must stand before you just as it is; there must be no descriptions like the war news, written in the home office; I must know whereof I speak. I am going to have a tender-hearted warden and a jail-break; I must *know* about them. Now, who can help me out but you?"

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Farnsworth, "what you really need is to take an escaped convict to your bosom for a few weeks. You don't want a reputable, high-minded man of the law, like me."

"Somewhere among your acquaintance, George, there must be just the person I need. Think, now, of all your clients. Can't you recall a sweet, innocent, refined—she must not be a creature of the slums, you understand; I have fancied her more sinned against than sinning, with a loving heart, driven mad by wrong to commit a crime against which her whole better nature revolts—something of that sort?"

"Well, I have known quite a number of law-breakers in my twenty years of criminal practice, but I can't say that I can put my finger on any one of them who seems to answer that description. Sweet—innocent—with a loving heart and a better nature—h'm! . . ." Farnsworth mused for a moment, smiling ironically mean-

while. Suddenly his face lightened and became also more serious, as if the thought that occurred to him forbade levity. "I have it, Ashton! Ada!—poor Ada!"

"What about her? Who is she?" asked Barron, and his own countenance lengthened in sympathy with Farnsworth's.

The older man did not reply at once, but, half rising from his seat, pointed downward toward the plaza. Barron's eyes, thus directed, fell on the forlorn woman in the gray cloak, still sitting in the same spot. She had finished counting her papers and was replacing them in a waterproof bag which she carried slung from her shoulder.

"Well, what of her? Who is she?"

"Ada—Ada Fessenden. Do you remember?"

It all came back to Barron as he continued looking down at the solitary figure in the mist.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I remember. There had been a child, and it died. The man's name was Blanchard. She shot him with his own pistol. You defended her. Juries are usually lenient in such cases. How did she come to be convicted?"

"Well, we had a hanging judge, in the first place—Colby—and a savage young district attorney, anxious to make a name for himself. The public was out of patience with miscarriages of justice about that time, and she herself made an unfavorable impression in court—no tears, no fainting, nothing to appeal to the jury. I did the best I could for her and looked for acquittal, but she was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years at San Quentin. Her term was shortened by the Goodwin act, and she has been out now for a year. Awhile ago I noticed her selling papers at the corner, and asked her how she was getting on. Her lip quivered and she said, 'Not very well.' People who remembered her history were afraid to employ her, and she added, 'It always follows me.' I offered her a little something, but she declined it—very nicely, however—and said she called

herself Anna Brown now and hoped to do better selling papers; people in the streets would not inquire into her past or ask for references. In spite of her story there is something good in the girl. She was odd, unusual; wouldn't talk, even to me. I had to make up the defense—emotional insanity—the best way I could, without any assistance from her."

"But she is not insane?"

"No, no; rather less so than the average woman, I should say. Now tell me, what is your *modus operandi*? In order to make a study of her she must be always at hand, and the very things you most want to know she will be least likely to speak of."

"True enough, but all the ingenuity in the world hasn't been absorbed by the legal profession, my dear boy. It will be strange if I can't find a way out of the difficulty. The studio needs a housekeeper, and Mrs. O'Halloran has decamped. She says I'm no true jintleman, and no rale lady could abide me. My books require dusting; my fire will have to be replenished; there are a thousand duties poor Jane must perform which will bring her many times a day to my sanctum, and, once there—while she is busy with tongs or dust-brush—I will draw her out, George, lead her on; sound her as delicately and cleverly and relentlessly as ever you played a witness in the box—" He broke off abruptly. "It seems mean—downright brutal, doesn't it? But I can't, of course, force her confidence. If she tells me, well and good. She will, at least, have a comfortable roof over her head and be safely out of the streets."

The two men rose together and looked down at the woman again, thoughtfully and in silence. She had moved to the corner, and, reaching timidly forward from the edge of the wet pavement, was offering her papers to people who hurried by unheeding.

That evening, when the two friends met at dinner, Farnsworth said: "Well, the first step in the great American novel of the twentieth century has been taken. Jane is yours."

"Command me for life, George! How did you manage it?"

"I began by buying an 'extra.' Jane's clientèle is evidently not large, and time, as well as papers, seemed to hang heavy on her hands. We fell into conversation. I asked her if business was dull, and she said it was. Then I asked her if she could cook, sweep, dust, and she said she could. It appears that she was something of a trusty during her last year at the prison. The warden's family had her in the kitchen. I told her I knew of a nice literary gentleman who needed someone to dust his books and stimulate his brain with strong coffee, and she agreed to come at any figure you may mention. In other words, she jumped at the chance, Ash. It was pathetic."

The next morning Barron found Miss Ada Fessenden, *alias* Anna Brown, standing on his doorstep when he came to the studio, and, letting her in with a latch-key, he took her through the empty house into the domain formerly presided over by Mrs. O'Halloran, and explained to her what had been the duties and emoluments of that spirited and convivial soul, who, in moments of ill-advised hospitality, had regaled her friends on his champagne and *pâté de foie gras*.

"You may sleep here or not, as you like," he said. "There is a comfortable room for you on the top floor. I use the house for a studio and live at my club. There will be little cooking. What I particularly require is that you shall keep my library and study—the rooms where I work—in good order, my books dusted, a fire laid—" He went on enumerating his personal requirements until it would seem that few able-bodied men could be in need of more assiduous attendance. Meanwhile his glance took note of hair, complexion, figure. Certainly it was not beauty which had been a snare to poor Jane. She was a thin little weather-beaten woman of an enigmatical blankness of aspect. Neither vice nor virtue was expressed in her face. The eyes—set widely apart—denoted intel-

ligence, but it was an intelligence turned back upon itself, a sullen, wounded thing, hidden in some dark, closed chamber of the mind. Barron tried to imagine those colorless, pinched lineaments irradiated by joy, coquetry, anger, grief—any one of the ordinary human emotions of everyday life. Impossible. If Jane had ever worn her heart on her sleeve, she had long since learned the wisdom of placing it in a less exposed position.

Her age was as incalculable as her character. She looked thirty-five, but Farnsworth, after a little mental arithmetic, declared her to be twenty-seven. He recalled, from time to time, incidents of her life which had come to his knowledge during the trial, and Barron listened attentively. She came to be the principal topic of conversation at their tête-à-tête seven o'clock dinner—for they were usually alone—and then, and always afterward until the day when her name was dropped between them forever, they alluded to her humorously, yet with a sort of contrite tenderness, as “Jane,” and often “poor Jane,” remembering how pitiful a creature she was from whatever standpoint one regarded her.

Barron's studio was in one of those old buildings which the evolution of a great city leaves stranded here and there, like flotsam from a receding tide. They look at you with something of human sadness in their scarred and faded faces, seeming to implore remembrance of their heyday and to protest mutely against that strange and terrible thing called Progress, which values only what is new and has no heart for pitiful old age.

Barron had chosen for his literary workshop one of the quaintest of these melancholy derelicts, a two-story basement wooden house surmounting a high stone bulkhead topped by a worm-eaten balustrade, the whole rising sheer from the pavement with the impregnable air of a fortress. The street before it was steep and paved with antiquated cobbles, between which tufts of grass made a pleasant, almost rural greenness. An occasional cable-

car slid smoothly down the incline, but there was no travel upward; no rattle of wheels or roar of traffic vexed the ear. These sounds of a busy world, if heard at all, came faintly and fitfully from the more level thoroughfares below.

The bulkhead was pierced by a narrow archway, and this gave entrance to a winding stair, by which one climbed laboriously—or joyously, perhaps, if, like Barron, one were young and strong and in love with the muses—to a neglected garden, overrun with ivy and nasturtium and mournfully ornamented by two fluted urns filled with weeds. It was a veritable “ghost of a garden,” and, like Swinburne's, too, “fronted the sea.”

Looking west and northward, one saw the open arms of the Golden Gate, Mt. Tamalpais, cloud-wrapped or basking in the sun; the villa-dotted steepes of Sausalito and little frowning Alcatraz; eastward, the painted funnels and towering masts of the water-front, Goat Island, and the blue line of Contra Costa's hills; downward, and close at hand, the black labyrinth of Chinatown.

Barron was fond of the place. It gave him solitude without a too inconvenient isolation, and breathed romance into reality.

He had filled the old house with curios gathered in a migratory period of his life, rare rugs, pictures, tables, chairs, chests, weapons, hangings—all disposed throughout the large, high rooms with a fine sense of fitness and effect.

It was no stretch of the imagination to say that these treasures required dusting; and Barron, accustomed as he was to the late hours of the sybaritic Mrs. O'Halloran, had fancied that his new servitor also would be often in his presence while attending to her domestic duties. It was not so, however. A week passed, and, except that his fire burned bright and all his belongings were guiltless of dust or disorder, the original of Jane Ford might have had no existence outside the realms of fancy.

Farnsworth made a point of asking,

every night, how the great work was coming on, and it was humiliating to have to tell him that Jane and he were still strangers.

"Remember, Ash," Farnsworth had said, "you are supposed to be in complete ignorance of her history. She begged me not to tell you, and I had to assure her that I wouldn't. Of course, that left the impression that you didn't know."

"Certainly, I understand. She would lose half her value as a study if she suspected I knew."

At the beginning of the second week Barron came an hour earlier than usual, only to see the tail of a blue cotton gown vanishing down the back stairs. He pulled an ancient bell-cord, which still maintained its connections with the nether regions, and, very promptly, a trim maid answered the summons. Jane at last!

"Please light the fire—er—Anna," he said, recovering himself on the brink of calling her by the nearer and dearer name. "I am a trifle early today. And then put up those curtains a bit and make me a cup of strong coffee. I think you will find some tinned biscuits somewhere about. I came away from the club without my breakfast."

As Jane knelt before the fireplace he regarded her with a feeling of pleasure and surprise. She had changed already for the better. There was light in the dull eyes, suppleness and grace in the forlorn figure; there seemed even a growing sheen on her hair, which she wore brushed up smoothly from her forehead in a way that made her look attractively tidy and childlike.

"So much for comfortable food and a decent bed," he said to himself, and was pleased to think that whatever selfish advantage might come to him through Jane was sure to be offset by the benefit to her. He noticed her neat print gown, the freshness of her apron, the loose dogskin gloves which she wore while handling the coal. Jane's hands were doubtless pretty, and she wished to preserve them. Was vanity her besetting weakness?

When she returned with the coffee

he was still further gratified to note its clearness and aroma, the deftness with which she placed the tray on a lacquer table beside his desk, and the circumstance of his biscuit being served on a little pink plate instead of in the tin box which originally contained it, after the primitive method of Mrs. O'Halloran.

He saw, too, that her hands were indeed pretty, as he had fancied. She went to tend the fire again, and he took occasion to ask if she were staying in the house at night. "I pay a night-watchman for looking after the place, so it is not necessary that you should stay here if you are afraid," he said.

"I am not afraid," she replied briefly.

It was almost the first time she had spoken to him. He was pleased also to find that her voice was musical and low—that "excellent thing in woman."

"It is certainly very solitary. Many women would lack the courage for it."

"I am used to solitude," said Jane, and, picking up her coal-scuttle, she went swiftly and noiselessly away.

He did not find it easy to sound Jane as to her tastes and opinions. A vigorous tweak of the bell-cord would bring her quickly to his presence, alert, obedient, executing his orders with a speed that whisked her away almost as rapidly as she came. Unsummoned, she remained wholly aloof. He began to be irritated. Farnsworth was pressing him to know how Jane's character was developing.

At the end of a fortnight he rang for her, and, in a studiously curt tone, commanded her to take down the Encyclopedia Britannica and dust it thoroughly. A frightened look came into her face and Barron saw at once that she feared his displeasure. Poor Jane! The curbstone was looming before her once more.

"Have you done it lately?" he inquired, filled with compunction.

"Yesterday."

"Well, then, of course it can't need it again so soon. I didn't know. Please take pen and ink and write my name and address—my club address, that is—on the margin of one page in

every volume. It is a precaution against their being stolen or lost. I have it done to all my books, and I wish you would go through them, from time to time, and see that it has not been omitted."

"Shades of Machiavelli!" thought Barron, "now at last I shall have something to tell that nuisance, Farnsworth."

He brought a step-ladder and Jane ascended to the top shelves and handed down to him the many volumes of the encyclopedia, which he placed on a table near his desk. While engaged in this bookish employment it seemed natural to ask if she were fond of reading; and, upon being told that she was, to inquire what kind of literature pleased her most. No, she did not care for tales of mystery or adventure, but was very fond of poetry—Longfellow and Tennyson, especially—and thought "The Reveries of a Bachelor" a "beautiful book."

Barron was somewhat surprised. Farnsworth had spoken of her as "uncommonly intelligent and refined, for her class," but he had not particularized the class, and Barron was left with the impression that she knew something of the three R's and had such dubious refinement as consists in appearing to be what one is not.

"Have you read the *Rubáiyát*?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you like it?"

"Some parts of it. I couldn't understand the whole. It doesn't seem right to teach that all we have to do is to drink and forget."

"But if one can't forget without the aid of an occasional glass, what then?"

"It is better to remember."

Barron smiled inwardly.

"You believe, then, that we have an immortal soul, which it is our duty to look after pretty sharply?"

"Yes, sir."

"You wouldn't stifle it when it makes itself disagreeably sanctimonious, as souls will at times; give it a drop of lethe, beer, champagne—whatever you

have at hand to put it to sleep, while you listen to the voice of pleasure?"

"No-o, sir."

There was something charmingly literal and honest about Jane, after all. Her voice was beginning to falter. She had suspended her work on the books and was looking at him with solemn, almost apprehensive eyes.

"Give me volume twenty-nine," remarked Barron reassuringly. "Are you religious, then, Anna? Most women are."

"I try to be."

"Well said!" thought Barron. Aloud he observed: "You say your prayers, I suppose, and go to church?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what do you pray for, child? That we may have fair weather with a falling barometer, and that the sun, moon and stars may revolve around the earth?"

"I pray to be forgiven."

Nothing could have been more gently, soberly uttered. It was not meant for a rebuke, yet Barron felt his cheek burn as if from a blow. He gave some further directions about the books and went back to his writing. The girl came presently and seated herself at the table. For an hour she wrote busily. He glanced at her from time to time; her face was pale and strained, and he knew that he had made it so.

That night he said to Farnsworth: "George, Jane is a moralist!—a poor, little, ignorant, half-starved Puritan, who has fallen off Plymouth Rock into the deep sea by the merest accident; one misstep, and down she went! It's a pity."

"How do you arrive at these opinions?" asked Farnsworth skeptically.

"How does a man of heart and sentiment arrive at anything? It takes a fellow like you to ask such a question," replied Barron, with a quizzical smile. But for some reason he did not find it easy to tell Farnsworth how he had reached his conclusions.

The encyclopedia having been duly marked and returned to its place, Barron bethought him of many other things which needed doing within the

limits of his library and study. The two rooms were practically one, divided only by a wide arch, so that, as Jane moved about from shelves to table or sat before the various cabinets, examining and arranging their contents, she was always under Barron's eye. At first he regarded her rather coldly and scientifically, much as a surgeon might view an interesting tibia; but, as time went on slowly, imperceptibly, she stole on his senses in a personal way, and his mind slipped, by degrees, from its critical and curious attitude into one of sympathy and confidence. For certainly, as Farnsworth had said, there was "something good" in Jane.

Often, as her neat little figure flitted about the rooms or drooped earnestly over her work at the table, his eyes rested on her with tenderness as well as penetration, and insensibly some of the gentleness of his mental view of her crept into his manner.

She was so slight and weak a thing for man to have wreaked his vengeance on!

"There is only one tribunal fit to judge a woman," thought Barron; and he wondered what manner of men those twelve citizens must have been to whom Jane's sin had seemed so scarlet, and what sort of villainous, ill-conditioned turnkey could have had the heart to lock her up at night.

He found himself looking at the pretty, delicate hand traveling over his writing-paper, and thinking incredulously of what that little hand had done.

Jane's demeanor was sensitive and modest. A sharp word or look would bring the tears to her eyes. She was fond of animals—little, helpless creatures especially—and had already a foundling puppy and a broken-winged linnet happily domesticated below stairs.

Barron let her do very much as she liked, for her tastes and desires seemed simple and innocent enough. She enjoyed working in the garden, and he encouraged her in it, not so much for the sake of his flower-beds and shrub-

beries—which he preferred, indeed, in their former picturesque disorder—as for the opportunities it afforded him of offhand little talks as he passed in or out, beginning always with some timely remark on horticulture, but drifting rapidly, at his direction, into more personal channels.

If Jane felt flattered by his thus lingering to chat with her, there was nothing in her manner to indicate it. She went on digging and pruning, with hardly a look at the very presentable figure at her elbow. Barron was not easily discouraged; and, moreover, he often found Jane's silence as eloquent as her conversation, and interpreted her averted gaze as only an exaggerated form of respect. There was a piquant charm in this little air of reverential aloofness which delighted him, even while he sought to destroy it as a barrier to his full understanding of her.

There were times when he told himself that he already knew enough; that what she had not told him was of as great value as anything she could reveal; that the mere silent, uncommunicative, incomprehensible Jane was in herself a revelation, and could only be spoiled and belittled by unseemly probing.

"After all," he thought, "one learns quite as much of a rose by letting it unfold as by pulling it apart."

Coming up the stairs from the street one day he found Jane in a limp heap at the foot of the garden step-ladder, which had spread, after the diabolical manner of its kind, and thrown her violently to the ground. She was pale, almost senseless and evidently in great pain. Barron lifted her to her feet, intending to support her into the house, but she sank immediately against his arm with such a blanching of face and lips that he saw at once there was something seriously wrong.

"What is the matter, Anna?" he asked. "Where is the pain? Have you sprained your ankle?"

There was no answer, and without further ado he picked her up as if she had been a child and carried her

through a long passageway and up a flight of stairs into the dining-room.

Here there was a couch, and, laying her down upon it, he fetched a basin of water, bathed her temples, loosened her collar and forced a little brandy between her lips. She opened her eyes presently and attempted to rise, but the effort brought a cold dew on her forehead, and she sank back again, looking at him piteously without speaking. Barron sat down beside her and fanned her with a newspaper for a few moments, until the color began to creep once more into her cheeks. He made her taste the liquor again, and after a little she said, in a faint whisper: "It is my ankle. I could never bear pain. I am sorry to make so much trouble."

"Don't speak of it," he replied. "I am sure you are doing splendidly. Many a strong man has fainted from a sprain. Let me look at the ankle now and see if I can't do something for it. You needn't be afraid I shall bungle, for I'm a bit of a surgeon. I can give you 'first aid,' anyway, and then we can have Dr. Meredith see it."

"I don't believe it will be necessary, sir, but you are very kind . . . I think . . . in a few minutes . . . I shall be able to walk——"

She struggled into a sitting position, catching her breath between every word, and then sat silent, holding to the back of the couch, while tears of pain and helplessness trickled down her cheeks.

"Now, who is the better judge, child?" said Barron. "You are not going to walk in a 'few minutes,' nor perhaps in a few weeks, unless you are very careful and obey directions, for a sprained ankle is the deuce and all. Don't cry, dear. It's hard to bear, isn't it? I'll put a cushion under the foot to keep it from jarring, and we'll take off your shoe, and see where the trouble lies."

The words "child" and "dear" slipped easily from Barron's lips when speaking to women. To him, as to many men of the virile temperament and conscious strength, Woman was a child always. He neither accepted her

as an equal nor despised her as an inferior, nor worshiped her as a saint. He loved her, collectively and individually; she was his joy, his solace, a thing of beauty in an ugly world; if he could have stayed the winds of heaven they would never have blown roughly on her.

Poor Jane, pale, tearful, with the softness of suffering and dependence lending a new charm to her personality, touched him at that moment no less than as if she had been of his own sphere.

He placed a sofa-cushion under the disabled foot, which was already badly swelled, and with his pocket-knife severed the lacings of her shoe; then he drew it off gently, cut away the stocking, and, dipping a towel in cold water, wrapped it lightly around foot and ankle. Deftly and cleverly as he performed the work, she was white and trembling again when he had finished.

"I am going down now to the nearest telephone to call up Dr. Meredith, but I shall be back immediately. Is there any hartshorn about the house?"

"There is a bottle on the shelf in the bathroom."

Barron brought it and placed it, with a glass of water, on a little table beside the couch.

"If you should be faint again, smell the hartshorn and drink the water; no more brandy today. You have taken quite enough for a teetotaler." He smiled, recalling Jane's opinion of Omar's philosophy, and she looked up at him with an answering smile—the first he remembered to have seen on her face. It was slight, fleeting, very sweet, showing milky-white teeth.

His eye wandered over the girl's hair, curling in moist tendrils about her forehead, where he had dampened it; the smooth oval of her cheek, her white throat and nerveless little hands.

There was an elusive beauty in Jane, after all. Where was it? Not in eyes, or brow, or mouth alone, but in all three. It flickered from one to the other, like a will-o'-the-wisp, and made that vagrant charm which the Scotch call *glamour*.

As he turned to leave the room her voice, low and tremulous, detained him.

"Mr. Barron, I think I shall be able to walk in a little while—perhaps a few days."

"You do, do you?" smiling ironically. "Well, we will get Dr. Meredith's opinion on that."

"But if I can't walk for several weeks, or do the work, what will—" she hesitated, and, seeing his eyes fixed on her rather sternly, added, almost in a whisper—"become of me?"

"You will be bored, child, horribly bored. Time will hang heavy on your hands. Now keep yourself quiet and comfortable till I get back."

He returned presently and was followed within the hour by Dr. Meredith, who pronounced the injury a severe sprain, applied fresh bandages and enjoined complete rest for at least a fortnight.

After he had gone Barron came into the room and found Jane sobbing piteously, with her face buried in the sofa-cushions.

Among many unintelligible sentences he managed to make out that she desired first of all to die; but, failing that, to be sent to the City and County Hospital, and to come back into his service as soon as she had recovered.

"Have you a particular fancy for the City and County Hospital?" he inquired.

"No-o, sir; but there is all the work to be done, and if I can't walk——"

"Well, I don't know as I value you solely as a pedestrian; and as an acrobat you are certainly a dead failure. You can read a little, can't you, or write for me, while your ankle is mending?"

"Yes, sir."

At this prospect the tears almost ceased to flow.

"And Rosa Pedrotti"—Rosa was the ashman's wife, and had been a servant in Barron's household before her marriage—"is equal to taking care of me and looking after the garden and falling off the step-ladder as well as yourself, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Jane's face was in an April state of gladness now.

"Well, then, dry your eyes and let me carry you upstairs. Rosa will soon be here, and she will wait on you until you are able to do for yourself."

As he bent to lift her the girl shrank involuntarily, and a swift blush, like a light behind porcelain, dyed face and throat.

"Put your arms around my neck; I can carry you more easily that way; and be careful of your foot as we go up the stairs."

He spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, and she obeyed him in silence, as if reassured against some inward scruple.

Neither spoke again until they had reached her room.

Jane's chamber was like herself—small, neat, ascetically plain.

She had stripped it of all unnecessary furniture. There was a narrow iron bed with a little stand beside it, holding a prayer-book and Bible; a simple dressing-table, a mirror and one chair. The floor and walls were bare. There were no foolish trifles; no ornaments to please the eye; no photographs to give a hint of any love or friendship in her life. So a devotee's cell might have looked, or that other narrow chamber within stone walls where she had slept—or waked—so long, on a little iron cot not unlike this.

Barron had never felt more conscious of the tragedy of Jane's existence than during the moment that he stood in her room. Its silence and emptiness mirrored her own being; it was the environment not of her body alone, but of her soul.

He bent over her bed an instant and put his hand on her hair. It was fine and soft to the touch and made a pathetic, Madonna-like shadow above the clear brow.

"Take care of yourself, child. Rosa Pedrotti is a good soul and will look after your ankle."

It is with such phrases that we bridge the chasms of feeling in this world.

Barron went back to his study and wrote with unusual ease and force. New experiences always gave fresh

impetus to his mind. For this reason he had traveled; to this end studied humanity. He was not a philanthropist who loves, but a surgeon who dissects.

Rosa Pedrotti, florid as her name, plump, black-eyed, with flashing teeth and large rings in her ears, ruled in Jane's stead.

Her reign was noisy, amiable and efficient. She served Barron with sour wine in place of coffee, and made tempting dishes of spaghetti and grated cheese, which he shared with Farnsworth and other congenial spirits who came to smoke and dawdle in the studio of an evening. She was kind to Jane, lifting her about in her strong arms as if she had been a bit of thistledown, bathing her, dressing her, showering soft pats and unintelligible Italian poesies of speech upon her. The girl's meager little body and restrained nature appealed to her woman's Southern exuberance.

As for Jane, no thirsty, blighted flower ever expanded more readily to sun and dew than she to Rosa Pedrotti's ministrations.

In the quiet and peace of those idle days a thousand sweet, lulling voices came to her, echoes of sounds long forgotten; whispers, too, of things she had never known. It was a time of deep, deep happiness and calm, such as she had heard comes to dying people who have shrived their souls and turned their eyes heavenward. Life's travail is over, and they see only an infinite tenderness. But what of the soul unshrived—the sin unexpiated?

The question was not new to Jane. Once it had had power to torture her with its clarion note; now some gentler voice seemed to breathe it in her ear, murmuring, like a mother who rebukes and pardons in a breath, "Repent and be forgiven."

Barron, who never cultivated his intellect at the expense of his physique, went off on a duck-shooting expedition to the Marin County marshes, and was absent during the greater part of Jane's convalescence. She was about again when he returned, limping and a little

pale, but as anxious to resume her duties as Rosa was to return to her ash-covered Lares and Penates in the Latin Quarter.

Barron noticed the girl's fragile look, and was more than ever indulgent and unexacting. He had almost ceased to think of her as either a moral problem or a servant. She had come to seem an inalienable part of his household, like the vagrant dog which had taken possession of his garden or the maimed bird singing in his conservatory.

He fancied that the girl avoided him. Her work in his rooms was performed before he came in the morning; more than once, as she served his coffee, he marked her changing color and unsteady hand.

One evening, working later than usual in the studio, he felt the need of a fire and rang for Jane to light it.

Having performed this service she did not go away immediately, as was her wont, but lingered on the hearth-rug, making a pretense of arranging the mantel ornaments to better advantage and stealing, as he fancied, rather miserable looks at him.

"Well, Anna, how is the ankle?" he asked, glancing up from his desk; and then, observing her more closely, he saw that she was deeply agitated and on the verge of tears.

"Why, what is it?" he exclaimed. "Are you not well? What is the trouble? Is the foot ailing again?"

"Oh, Mr. Barron! It is not my ankle, it is my mind! There is something I have wanted to tell you; no, I have not wanted to tell you, but I must! I can't sleep under your roof and eat your bread and have you kind to me and thinking I am good when I am not good, and keeping me out of the hospital and paying the doctor and having Rosa to wait on me and buying the crutches and letting me have Carlo and the poor bird, and not minding when he digs up the garden——"

"Wait, child, wait," said Barron, half laughing; and he rose and came toward her.

Jane's eloquence and volubility, after long silence, were like the bursting

forth of pent waters—unexpected, overwhelming.

"If all these things have been on your mind, no wonder you have found them worse than a sprained ankle. Never give them another thought! I have been only too glad to have you here, my girl, sick or well; for you have been good and conscientious——"

"Not good, Mr. Barron, not good!" she interrupted wildly. "If you had dreamed, when you took me in here, who I was and where I came from—how wicked I had been, and what I did and how I had suffered—oh, justly, justly, as God knows; and how no door was open to me but yours, and only yours because you didn't know——"

"Hush, child, be still!" said Barron, taking her two hands in his. A high-backed, old-time settle stood beside the fireplace; he pushed her gently into it, and, seating himself before her, leaned forward in his chair—a hand on either knee—surveying her gravely in silence.

It was the moment he had waited for so long and impatiently. Here, within grasp, was the thing he had coveted; he had only to reach out and take it; no, merely to open his palm and receive it—Jane's bleeding heart—for his scalpel to dabble in.

What was it withheld him? What scruple restrained him now, who had never before felt qualm?

While he sat in doubt she began speaking again.

"It is something that Mr. Farnsworth knows, but he promised me never to tell you. He would never have told you, anyway, I am sure, because he has been a very good friend to me, and it is not in him to hurt anyone; but I was afraid and made him promise. Once, when it was all new, I used to tell people what I had done; it seemed more honest. They could take their own choice, then, and not feel that they had been deceived; but always it was the same. They were afraid of me, and turned me away. Sometimes, if they were very good-hearted, they said they were sorry; but that was worst of all. If even people who are

sorry for you feel that they must be hard, then how hard those will be who are not sorry——"

"True, true," said Barron. "Don't cry, child. Tell me everything, if it will ease you."

The words seemed to come from him without his own volition.

"But when I have told you, you will not blame Mr. Farnsworth for having kept it a secret from you? Promise you will not, Mr. Barron! He only did it for my sake, because I was cold and wet and hungry. I am sure he would not deceive you if he thought it would do you an injury. But he knows the world; and I suppose he thought if you knew, you would only turn me away, as others have done. He must have believed in me a little, or he would never, never have sent me here to you—his best friend! Mr. Barron, that has been the only comfort—the only *real* comfort—I have had! It showed that he trusted me. It was the first time anyone . . . had trusted me . . . even the warden's family . . . watched me . . . and kept their children away—away . . . as if I would—hurt a child!"

She broke into convulsive weeping and turned her face against the tall back of the settle.

Barron did not find it easy to offer comfort. Either the firelight or his own thoughts had brought a deep flush to his cheek. He sat in silence, listening to Jane's sobs and the fitful dashing of rain against the windows. The wind complained in the chimney. Alternate shadow and flame played over the girl's drooping figure and the grotesque, black-oak carvings behind her.

Grimacing faces flashed into view and melted again with the rise and fall of the fire. All seemed unreal, dream-like; himself most of all. The continued silence forced him to speak.

"You mention the warden. You have been in prison, then. Well, since I value you for what you have been to me personally, in my own experience, it matters nothing what you were be-

fore. Speak or be silent, as your heart moves you."

The girl stirred, dried her tears, drew herself to a more upright position, and, with her eyes on the glowing coals, not on the man opposite, began that story which, as it happened, was never to be embodied in the form of "Jane Ford," nor ever used by Barron as literary material.

In after years, try as he would, he could not recall the words in which poor Jane told her history; the language with which she clothed those images of want, ignorance, temptation, ruin, abuse and crime which passed and repassed his mental vision as she talked. In broken phrases, often homely, sometimes beautiful; without affectation or self-consciousness, as simply as a child confessing a fault in some stricken moment of its little soul, she brought her life before him; not as a story, but as a picture.

He saw and felt, rather than heard it.

No rounded periods, no flowers of speech, no discriminating wit which conceals or reveals as it chooses, could have touched Jane's narrative with greater pathos, or made it more eloquent. There were glimpses, too, of a simplicity and purity of mind which astonished him; a blossom nourished in the mire.

He listened almost without comment. After the first tremulous beginning Jane spoke clearly and courageously; there was no casting about for words; the delicacy, yet directness, of her speech pleased the artist sense in him; no note jarred. The woman, the man, the silent, shadowy room, the firelight dancing on the wall, the rain against the pane and the wind lamenting in the chimney—all were a part of the pathos of Jane's life as it unfolded, scene on scene.

When she had finished a deep hush succeeded. Barron bent forward and took the girl's cold hand in his. She was trembling from head to foot. They sat so for some time in silence. Then, weeping bitterly, she rose to go.

Her hands, pressed against her face,

blinded her; and Barron, as she was about to pass his chair, caught her within the circle of his arm, and drew her toward him.

"I am sorry, child, sorry like those people you spoke of; but not afraid. I trust you, believe in you more than ever. Sleep now, and forget it all. You are safe here with me; no one to doubt or question; no more cold and hunger. Let me see you happy——"

She slipped away from him, shyly, like a young girl, but, in going, caught his hand and pressed her lips to it—once, twice, as if in a tumult of love and gratitude.

They saw little of each other for a week afterward. Barron was working hard, and wished to be alone. But one day he called her into the library to look up some books of reference, and as she entered the room his glance, which had turned toward her carelessly, was arrested, and remained so fixed upon her that she blushed deeply.

It was Jane, indeed, but not his gray waif of the streets; not even the Jane of a week ago. This was a radiant creature of life and color; pink-cheeked, starry-eyed, with a look of glowing inward happiness transfiguring her outward being; Jane in white—slender, beautiful, diaphanous.

One of those strange, warm waves which sweep over San Francisco not infrequently in early spring was turning bleak February into leafy June.

The sun-steeped city was joyous. Barron laid down his pen and felt the lotus-eater's spell creeping over him—the breath of amaranth and moly.

"Jane," he began, but caught himself and added quickly, "Anna, I am thinking of giving some sort of entertainment in this moldy barrack to pay off old scores—a garden-party, if the weather holds; or a 'cold swarry,' such as Sam Weller went to. Perhaps a hot swarry would be better; spaghetti, ravioli, tagliarini—a lot of those messes Rosa Pedrotti makes, with a little music thrown in, and some conversation—heaven knows of what! About forty people. Can you and

Rosa manage it, with a couple of waiters from outside?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I am sure we can, and it would be very nice. I could—that is, you could—hang Chinese lanterns in the garden——"

"And shut Carlo Brown in the coal-bin till the festivities are over," interpolated Barron.

Jane broke into an irrepressible laugh.

Her white figure was prettily outlined against the dark morocco bindings on the shelves. A dimple—where had it kept itself all this time?—showed in her cheek, and her eyes half closed like a child's when it laughs. She looked very young and innocent.

"Dig out the punch-bowl and polish up my belongings generally, won't you, Anna? Gad! I don't believe I have more than four spoons to my name."

"There are seven, sir."

"Seven spoons won't do, however friendly, even sentimental, the company may be; eh, child? I am going to play the generous host. We must have more of everything. I'll send up the caterers, and they'll find out my deficiencies fast enough. Meantime you and Rosa look after the house. Fix up a pretty dressing-room for the ladies. Trim it with flowers and have a long mirror, so they can see their trains."

"Will they dress so much? It will be like a ball."

"It will be a rich and rare combination, a 'blend' of a ball, a reception, a chafing-dish supper and a *conversazione*. We shall have dress suits, dinner-coats, smoking-jackets, trains and possibly the opposite extreme. But there will be some fine music. Listen on the stairs and you will hear Marescalchi play."

Barron, who had brought the art of informal entertaining to a fine point, was able to gather his company together before the passing of the hot wave; and the moon also furthered his plans by shining so softly and magically on the scene that his twisted staircase might have been one of the pathways leading into paradise; his dismantled garden a king's pleasure;

and his ugly, perpendicular house a royal pavilion, built for dalliance and joy.

Passers-by in the narrow street lingered like wistful peris before the archway or loitered along the pavement, listening to the music and watching the carriages disgorge their filmy freight.

Owing to the steep approach it was impossible to drive nearer than the corner of the street above or below, and the descending cars stopped only at the same points. Barron's guests, therefore, alighted at either the head or foot of the declivity and walked up or down, as best suited their convenience.

Lights glowed in every window. Through the open casements floated the entrancing strains of rag-time, played on the piano by the great Marescalchi himself in a moment of abandon. Red lanterns hung in the garden, and white and black figures sauntered about the paths, sat on the crooked stairs or leaned pensively over the moldering balustrade, like ghosts of those long-departed revelers who once made merry there.

For Jane, at least, the workaday world had ceased to be. She wore a cap, it is true; fetched and carried; performed a hundred menial services; force of habit kept hand and eye to their duty. Grateful guests perceived a neat little handmaiden who did not spill coffee over them or forget the sugar; but this was not Jane; it was a human machine, working automatically.

The real Jane, a creature all fire, impulse and imagination, was blind to such prosaic matters as eating and drinking, deaf to the tinkle of teaspoons and china.

She saw the glitter of jewels, the sheen of a woman's hair, the luster of soft fabrics, the looks on men's faces.

She heard music, murmured conversation, witticisms, speeches, bursts of laughter, whispered words not meant for her ear.

Neither sight nor mind received a clear impression. It was a "vision splendid"—a view that melts at the

edges and leaves all undefined, like the dazzling panoramas of our dreams.

Even Barron seemed changed to her. She had never seen him in evening dress; never known what he could be to others. She longed to look at him continually, yet dared not so much as meet his eye.

He took in to supper a very handsome elderly woman, in black lace and diamonds; and at his left hand sat her young daughter, a silent, shy girl in virginal white, to whom Marescalchi—the lion of the evening—paid marked attention.

After supper the great man played in earnest; and hand in hand on the back stairs Jane and Rosa Pedrotti wept and trembled in unison with his strings.

"It is the same as my Angelo plays in Magetti's," sobbed Rosa Pedrotti.

"Oh, no, Rosa; it can't be. It is like heaven!"

"Well, Angelo is like heaven," said Rosa stoutly. "You hear him once!"

But Jane had no spirit for argument or contradiction. The exaltation of her mood had reached the breaking point, and she longed to be alone; to let the waves of her feeling flow over her, unchecked. She felt that if she were by herself in her little room she would sob and sob from sheer happiness.

This, then, was the world; not that pit of blackness she had known, filled with wailing voices and travail of labor and sorrow, but a place of light and color and joy and love, where men were chivalrous, women tender, and all good and beautiful things bloomed naturally like flowers in the sun.

She recalled Barron's words, "I trust you. . . . There shall be no more cold and hunger."

Rosa Pedrotti, noting her rapt, tear-stained face, thought, "Ah, Marescalchi is like my Angelo; he breaks the heart!"

She did not know that the virtuosos and his violin were interpreting for Jane all the pain and passion of her past, and all her hope for the future.

Barron's guests would seem to have

needed his threatened hint to go home before sunrise. A congregation of sleepy cabbies waited for them at the foot of the hill, and they drove away almost in a body, sending back laughing good nights and many a parting word to their host in his eyrie.

Rosa Pedrotti and the caterers had departed. The last to go were the beautiful mother and daughter who had sat beside Barron at supper. Jane, having helped the ladies with their wraps, slipped out a side door and hung over a shadowy corner of the balustrade, looking down at the twinkling lights of the coupés below.

She noticed that Barron and his guests were lingering in the garden. Farnsworth was escorting the elder woman, and Barron the young girl, for whom he had just plucked a rose.

She held it a moment irresolutely, then fastened it in the bosom of her white cloak. There was a gentle diffidence and hesitancy in all her motions. Her fair hair was covered only by a lace scarf, and her face looked angelically pure in the moonlight.

Jane's eyes followed her wistfully. When they approached the narrow steps leading down to the street Farnsworth went first with the mother. As they disappeared around the curve in the staircase Jane saw Barron hold back the young girl and take her in his arms quietly, masterfully, with the air of a man who claims his own.

After a little, still holding her in that close embrace, he lifted her face from his breast and kissed forehead, cheek and lips; then he slowly, reluctantly released her and passed with her down the stair.

No word had been spoken. It seemed a picture, a fantasy.

Jane's eyes remained fixed where she had seen it. The stone Undine in the dry basin nearby was not more motionless than she.

The coupés rolled away through the sleeping streets; voices were heard again on the stairs, and Farnsworth and Barron came up through the garden into the balcony and seated themselves on the railing. They were smok-

ing and chatting lazily and contentedly.

Jane could not leave her retreat unobserved. She was very near them, but hidden from view by a potted palm. Some impulse—or was it a numbness of brain and body?—held her to her dusky corner. They spoke of this and that, with long lapses and blissful puffings between; the music, the supper, Marescalchi's genius, the various events of the evening. Nothing was said of the beautiful mother and daughter.

"Little Jane makes a neat maid," Farnsworth observed finally.

"Yes; she does very well."

"Looks worlds better, too, since she came to you. Knows where the next meal is coming from; that is a great beautifier in itself."

"Yes; eases the mind considerably."

"I feel sure Blanchard both starved and abused her, though she would never acknowledge it."

"I dare say."

"How is the great masterpiece of English fiction coming on?"

"Oh, so-so. It will be ready for the publishers by the end of the year. I have decided to leave out Jane—all but the name. I have a fondness for that, as the woman had for 'that sweet word, Mesopotamia.'"

"Hamlet with Hamlet left out! It seems a pity, after all the trouble we took to get her. What's the matter with poor Jane? Hasn't she proved the valuable study you expected? I confess I could never get anything out of her, even when her life depended on it; but I thought you might. Among all the criminals I have known I have never seen anything like that girl's stoicism. Brute courage is common enough, also a sort of fanatical exaltation which may pass for courage, but is, in reality, a form of mental derangement. There is, usually, in all criminals a manifest effort, a pose. Ada Fessenden was simply herself. Just what that self is, I have never been able to determine. I have called her a stoic; but who knows that she is not an enthusiast? The impulse, in both,

is often to conceal the excess in their natures. Who knows but poor little Jane's veins run fire, instead of the temperate fluid one imagines from the outward woman? Criminology, Ash, is a great study. It is like German grammar; there are more exceptions than rules in it."

There was a little pause, and then Farnsworth went on:

"So there is to be no Jane! Well, I'm no novel reader, but I confess I took an uncommon interest in that book. I should have liked to see what you could make out of such a character. It all seemed bald and bare enough to me—repulsive, even—but it takes you to find the jewel in the toad's head. You have a wizard's pen, Ash!—no doubt about that. What was the trouble? Did you find it more difficult than you thought to 'draw her out'? Jane is not easily drawn; I know that from my own experience during the trial. I might as well have tried to be on confidential terms with the sphinx. The prison details you could have got easily from other sources, and any old file of newspapers would have given you a realistic jail-break. But the girl herself! It is a pity you couldn't have made the thing work. I'm no artist myself, but I know the value of a living model. What was your idea, Ash? Why did you give it up?"

Barron flicked the ashes from his cigar before replying.

"Well," he said slowly, as if weighing each word, "I gave it up, partly because it is, as you say, repulsive; bare at least of all those graces that we associate with the heroine of a love story. Not that my book is essentially a love story; I aimed to make it a picture of life. But the more I thought of it the more I realized that the public wouldn't stand for it. We are all alike. We want a veil over our facts and a calcium light turned on our fancies. The coldest reader of fiction is fond of *couleur de rose*—demands it, indeed. If it is a man he wishes to think of the heroine as his sweetheart or his wife. He can't do that with Jane. A secondary character may be

a criminal, but not the woman that we imagine ourselves loving and marrying."

"That is a sentimental view, Ash, and you are a realist, sworn to reveal the facts of life even to readers who would rather not see them. Besides, it is a new thing for you to be so tenderly mindful of your public. I don't understand the change of base. I hope you are not going to write anything driveling. If you are, kindly omit the dedication!"

"No; it will be a good, strong story, such as even a criminal lawyer, steeped in gore, will not find dull. Don't worry about little Jane. She's mine, not yours, by the way; and even if I can't use her in a story, she will not have been without value to me. A good servant is hard to find these days."

The two men rose and strolled down the garden path toward the street. When they were gone Jane crept out from her corner and went into the house. It still wore a festal air.

She began putting out the lights and setting chairs and divans in their accustomed places. Some flowers had fallen on the carpet, and she picked them up mechanically. In the same way she closed the piano, placed the scattered music sheets in the cabinet, drew the curtains and set all in order. As she moved about the room a white figure moved with her in a full-length mirror on the wall. It paused when she paused, went on, stooped, rose as she did, with the same look in its eyes. If she had chanced to turn and meet those eyes fairly perhaps some shade of their meaning would have come to her. It was a look she had once known well.

Presently she went down to the dining-room on the first floor.

The tables had not been cleared away. There were heel-taps in the wineglasses, roses and bonbons scattered on the cloth. She turned out the lights here, too, and went to liberate Carlo, who had heard her step and was protesting against his uncongenial surroundings in the coal-house. He leaped against her and licked her face, but she

pushed him away gently, with a pre-occupied air, and shut him in the back hall where he always slept. He whined at being left. She remembered that he was fond of sweets, and, going back to the dining-room, brought him some bits of candy and a lady-finger. He did not eat them at once, but leaped up again, putting his huge paws on her chest; and for a moment she held him to her in the dark, leaning her cheek against his shaggy head.

As she groped her way up the dark staircase Barron's bell rang from the library. He was seated at his desk reading some letters and barely glanced at her as she came in.

"Don't sit up any longer," he said. "I meant to tell you that I would see to closing the house. It is so nearly morning that I might as well make a night of it by getting this correspondence off my hands. Please turn out those side lights and hand me that knife, will you, before you go?"

The knife in question had not been designed for the peaceful art of cutting paper. It was a two-edged dagger which Barron had picked up in British India on the Tibetan frontier and added to his collection of curious weapons. It hung, usually, in a glass cabinet with its fellows, but, having broken his ivory paper-cutter the day before, he had taken down this knife at random, used it and left it lying on the library-table.

As Jane picked it up and came toward him, something in her silence impressed him oddly. She approached close to his chair, as if to hand him the weapon.

Barron was a quick man, quick to think and act; but his utmost readiness and strength were not equal to the demands of that moment. In silence, with inconceivable swiftness and force, Jane struck at him with the dagger. He parried the blow with his arm and her aim was diverted; but, as it was, the point of the keen blade slit through coat-sleeve and cuff and drew blood.

For the space of a heart-beat they looked at each other. Then with a

desperate wrenching of her imprisoned hand, she tried to turn the knife on herself. She would have flung her body against it but that he held her back. The struggle was brief. Suddenly she relinquished her hold, and, drawing away from him, sank into a chair with a slow relaxing of the tense figure from head to foot.

Even to Barron, appalled by her treachery, there was something piteous in the exhaustion and despair of her look.

"There is blood on your arm," she murmured faintly. "See if you are hurt."

"A scratch. It is nothing serious."

Curiously enough her solicitude appeared quite genuine. He accepted it without question. Her eyes followed him as he placed the dagger in a compartment of his desk and turned the key upon it.

"I would not hurt you," she said, in a protesting tone, as if his action cut her to the heart.

"It is best to put the means beyond your reach," replied Barron drily.

She did not speak again, but lay back silent and inert, resting her head against the leather cushions of the chair. Presently a trembling began in her hands, extended to all her limbs and shook her like a convulsion. Barron rose, poured some water from a carafe, and, sitting down beside her, held the glass to her lips. She sipped from it at intervals and gradually the nervous tremor wore away; but the look of prostration and despair remained; grew deeper, indeed, with the passing moments.

Barron continued to sit beside her, holding the glass in his hand. An onlooker, ignorant of the relations between them, might have supposed them to be physician and patient. For a long time the girl drooped in her chair, motionless, dumb. At length, in a low tone and without looking at him, she said: "I heard what you and Mr. Farnsworth were saying on the balcony."

"And was that the reason for what you have just done?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How was it that you overheard our conversation?"

"I had come out to see the carriages drive away, and when you and Mr. Farnsworth came back you sat on the railing, very near me. The palm tree was between us. I did not wish to stay or try to hear, at first; but afterward I listened purposely."

"Were you there when Mrs. Winthrop and her daughter were leaving?"

There was the barest perceptible pause before her answer.

"Yes."

Barron was silent for a moment. The thought that rose to his mind was not one to be put in words.

"You resented our talk about you," he went on quietly, after that brief hesitation. "You felt that I had deceived you in professing to be ignorant of your history and in planning to make use of it in my book. I had given up that idea; you heard me tell Mr. Farnsworth that my plans for the story were changed; but I suppose the sting—the hurt—remained?"

He spoke questioningly, yet there was no response.

"Am I right?" he insisted.

The girl's eyes had been cast down. Now she raised them, and he saw in them a look of deep bewilderment and pain.

"Yes; but it is not the book. You may put me in it, if you like. It may do some woman good, and teach her—what I never knew. It is not that." She hesitated. "It is the world—the people—they hurt; and there is no use trying . . . it comes over you and you can't help the feeling . . . I will not mind going to prison again. I worked in the laundry, and it was warm there . . . and pleasant; and if you were good, and gave no trouble, you could have flowers . . . in a box . . . and sometimes a canary. . . . It was different from here, but not so hard . . . you always knew what to do. . . . Every day was the same . . . and no one spoke to you——"

Barron moved abruptly in his chair and set the glass down on the table.

"You did not think I would send you back to that place?" he asked in a strangely rough tone.

"I didn't know," she replied simply. "If you had not stopped me—" She broke off suddenly. All the lines of her face quivered, and, with the same quick gesture which he had seen on that evening when she kissed his hand by the fireside, she slipped from her chair to his feet and buried her face on his knee. He could feel her trembling against him, but she did not sob aloud.

He took her bowed head between his hands; and so, for a long time, they sat without speaking. When at last she stirred and made an effort to rise he lifted her to her feet, and, holding her by either arm, said gently:

"Go to bed, child, and try to sleep. I will talk to you later; tomorrow will be time enough, when you are calmer and have rested. But there is one thing I want to say to you. You tried to harm yourself just now. Promise me that you will never do that again. I told you once that I trusted you. If I leave you alone now, I want to feel that I can trust you still."

A shudder ran through the cowering figure, and with a passionate motion she covered her face with her hand.

"Promise me," he urged. There was a faint inclination of the bent head. "No, that is not enough. Say after me, 'I promise'; then I shall know that you will keep your word."

Silence.

"Say it."

"I promise."

It was little more than a whisper. Her breast heaved; her whole frame was visibly torn by a tempest of emotion; but she fought back the rising tide, disengaged herself from his hold and walked slowly toward the door. No outburst of tears or sobs could have seemed to Barron so piteous, so convincing as this mute self-restraint. It was the stoicism of the stricken animal, which seeks cover to nurse its wounds, uttering no whimper of pain, fleeing as if unhurt, till in some lonely thicket, far

from the hand that struck it down, it faints and falls and settles to the earth—poor beast that perishes—bearing its mortal pangs with more than human pride and courage. Something of this thought was in Barron's mind as he watched the girl turn to go. In the fiery passion of her attack upon him, in the flame of feeling that inspired it, how primitive, how savage she had been! Yet now, as she withdrew, there was a touching dignity about her, and the look of suffering on her face was not ignoble. A chair stood in her path, and she stumbled against it blindly. Barron stepped to her side and, steadying her with his arm, walked with her to the door.

Holding it open for her he said kindly: "Good night; remember, I trust you implicitly to keep your promise to me."

And she answered, not lifting her eyes to his: "I will remember. Good night."

When she had gone he stood for a moment, perplexed and anxious, by the closed door. Then, very softly, he opened it again and looked out. Jane had crossed the broad hall and was ascending the stairs. She moved wearily, with bent head, grasping the rail for support. All at once her footsteps faltered, paused; her arm slid along the balustrade, and, laying her face down upon it, she leaned there in a stillness so absolute that death itself was not more quiet. The tall French clock on the landing ticked off the minutes with solemn, relentless precision. There was no other sound.

Presently the girl lifted her head, drew herself erect and resumed her way upward. Barron, on whose face, as he watched, resolution had strongly warred with impulse, went back to his study and sat idly down before his littered desk. The wound in his arm pained him; but a deeper pain tugged at his heart.

So it was over, done with, a failure, and worse than that—Jane and he must part! He could not plan, smugly and smoothly, as was his wont in arranging his affairs, how this severance

should be accomplished. He saw himself leading the same full, free and satisfying life, success and pleasure multiplying for him; happiness and fame his portion; love brimming the cup; but the girl—poor Jane! With what words should he send her again to the old want and misery? How steel himself to thrust her back on a world from which his own hand had rescued her? He invited anger, indignation, resentment, a dozen sternly logical emotions to eject these softer feelings from his mind. In vain; try as he would to view it otherwise, Jane's image came before him in guise so helpless, so pathetic, so doomed that he groaned in spirit at thought of her, and closed his eyes to shut the vision out.

Moon and stars had faded and the chill dawn was looking in at him when at last he fell into an uneasy slumber, sitting bolt upright in his chair. As the sun rose higher a sense of pleasant warmth stole over him, and he slept more soundly. It was ten o'clock when he awoke. The house was quiet. What of Jane? His first thought was of her. Had she, too, been able to rest, or had she kept lonely, unhappy vigil in that bare little room of hers, so suggestive of penitential tears, of spiritual mortification and scourging? He rose, extinguished the lamp above his desk, and, drawing up the shades, let a flood of summer heat and light into the room. So! it was to be another balmy day. The ships in the offing lay tranquil and dream-like on the water; a blue haze of heat dimmed the city's towers; his old garden smiled at him familiarly and invitingly; and there, serenely couchant on the gravel, was Carlo, viewing the morning scene with his usual calm, proprietary air. The sight of him was strangely welcome and reassuring. Jane, then, had risen and gone about her usual duties.

He would ring for her, order a cup of coffee, maintain his customary manner, give her breathing-space, a little time in which to regain strength and composure against the coming ordeal.

How would she look? He desired—was even anxious—to see her face

again. That sad and sphinx-like little countenance had become curiously legible to him; he could perceive there strange tracings, such as come to light sometimes when a blank paper is held to the fire. It was not curiosity, neither was it triumph which moved him; rather a profound pity and pain.

He pulled the bell-cord, and sat waiting. Five, ten minutes passed. There was no response. He rang again. Still no answer. The house began to seem ominously silent to him. Yet Jane was always silent. He rang a third time, waited patiently, but with growing disquietude, then sent a fourth peal clamoring through the house. Its vibration woke a deep admonitory note from Carlo; no other sound, no footstep approaching.

He left the library, went out into the hall and passed through all the rooms on the first and second floors. Their perfect order reassured him. Jane's neat hand had been here. Drawing-rooms, dining-room and kitchen were swept clean of all trace of last night's revel. She must have risen early, poor child! restless, perhaps; unable to sleep; glad to drown thought in action. He traversed the garden from end to end. No figure stooped by the flower-beds. Carlo, too indolent to rise, indicated a welcome with an undulatory motion of his body and tail.

Entering the house through the balcony, Barron ascended the stairs and proceeded along a narrow corridor to Jane's room.

His pulse had not altered by one heart-beat in that moment of peril last night; now an intolerable fear possessed him, and it leaped to sickening surety as he came near Jane's door and saw a white paper pinned upon it. "To Mr. Barron." So it was inscribed. It was characteristic of him that he opened it without change of countenance; only a close observer could have detected a slight relaxing of the tense jaw as he read on.

This is to say good-bye. I am going away. You said you would talk to me today, but I can't bear it. If you had said one hard word to me last night, I could have borne it better. I don't ask you to forgive

me. I shall never pray to be forgiven again, because it must be that I am too wicked. I have never known anyone with such wicked thoughts. I have put the six bottles of wine that were left over in the sideboard. I am taking Linda with me. Please excuse me for leaving Carlo, if you do not want him. I cannot take him with me, as he is a large dog, and eats a great deal. I would not like to see him suffer. I know you will be kind to him. Good-bye, Mr. Barron. I will pray for your happiness till I die.

A. F.

Twice, thrice, he read the letter; then, with a set face, crumpled it in his hand, as if unaware of what he did. Having walked some paces from the door he paused, came back, opened it and looked in. The bed was smooth; table and chair were empty. The figure he had feared to see was not there.

In August of that year the manuscript of "Jane Ford"—unquestionably Barron's masterpiece, though so changed from his original conception of it—was in the hands of the publishers; in September he was married to Adele Winthrop and went immediately abroad. A year was spent in foreign travel; another year in Florence, where he wrote his hardly less famous and successful novel, "The American Minister," and where his son was born.

A thousand fresh impressions had blurred the images of his Western life. How dull, how void of charm, how savorless, how empty seemed those old days of selfish ambition and unshared achievement! Barron was a man to whose broad culture and rich mind the storied charm of the Old World appealed very strongly. It was not new to him, but he saw it now with changed eyes. What had been beautiful before was still more beautiful; in everything there was a keener zest, a profounder depth, a truer joy.

They returned to America two years after their marriage; and once more on a marvelously still and balmy day in February, Barron found himself wandering alone, as if there had been no ties of wife and child, through the Latin Quarter of San Francisco, where an artist, whether of palette or pen, may find much curious material for

his fashioning. Chance led him down a steep incline—a narrow alley—in whose vicinage thrift and thievery, commerce and crime, strangely commingle. It is a spot to avoid at night. The light of day lay on it now, bright and warm. The bay sparkled in the sun; at the foot of the descent the tall tower of the Hall of Justice pierced the sky significantly. A child's laugh, proceeding apparently from the bowels of the earth, drew his attention downward; and there, below the level of the street, lay a little garden, embowered in pepper trees and syringa bushes. It flanked a dark and noisome lane, but so shut in was it, so retired within its own greenery, that an oasis in a desert could not have looked more pastorally remote from harm.

At the right of the garden was a tiny house with an absurd balcony, like a rim around a birdcage. As if to point the simile, an actual cage, with a bird in it, hung above the balustrade.

Barron observed it idly in passing, but something unusual in its appearance arrested him; he turned back and looked at it more closely. It was a linnnet, and one wing drooped, as if broken. Dormant memories stirred in him at sight of the little hopping, bright-eyed creature. He stepped into the porch; there was no bell; he rapped on the door. Whom had he hoped to see? The door opened, and Rosa Pedrotti stood before him with cheeks as ruddy, teeth as flashing, earrings as large and golden as of yore. She welcomed him warmly. An added animation sprang to her mobile face as she invited him into her little parlor and brought forward a chair, from which she hurriedly brushed an invisible speck of dust. She herself remained standing; one must not seat oneself too boldly in the presence of a *grande signore*.

"Sit down, Rosa; I shall have a great deal to say to you. How are you? How is Angelo? How is business?"

"All very fine, *signore*. Angelo is in the fruit business now, on Broadway. But at night he plays in Magetti's, the same as before."

"That is good. I am glad you are

doing well. You look splendid, Rosa! Your cheeks are as red as ever, and you are three years younger, instead of older."

"I have a baby, *signore*."

"So have I!—*un Italiano vero*, Rosa, a Florentine! Is your child a boy?"

"Yes, *signore*."

They looked at each other and laughed, pleased with this mutual joy.

"If you wish to see him, *signore*, I will bring him in. He is in the garden."

"By all means! But let me go out to him. I would like to see your flowers, too."

They went down a shallow flight of stairs into the queer little underground garden, sweet with the odor of lilacs and spring violets, and sat on a green bench under a pepper tree.

There was much to say of the senior Angelo's new business; his increasing prosperity and change of residence; something also to be told of Barron's two years' wanderings; but for a long time no word was said of Jane. At length Barron remarked: "I see you have a linnet, Rosa. Does it sing?"

"Oh, yes, *signore*. It is a happy little bird, though its wing is broken and hangs down. It is afraid now to sing before you. Do you remember Anna Brown, that was in your house three years ago? Well, it is her bird. She give it to me, and say, 'Be kind to my poor Linda; it takes so little to make her happy; only a glimpse of sun, a seed and a drop of water now and then'; that was what she say."

"She was fond of animals," replied Barron. "I have her dog now—Carlo. He has grown to be a fine, large fellow. He and the baby are great friends. Do you see Anna often?"

"Ah, *signore*, you do not know? Anna is dead. After she leave your house I never see her. I do not know where she is, nor that she is gone from you; but one day Angelo say to me, 'I have seen Anna on Francisco street, and she is thin and pale like a ghost, but not sick, she says; and gets plenty of work. She is no more with the Signor Barron, who is married and gone

away to Europe, but she is sewing and lives on the Hill.' So I go up to see her; and ah, *signore*, when I see her, I know that Angelo is like all men—he does not understand! She is all alone in a dark little room in a court; *signore*, it is like a prison—and there she sews, sews, from morning till night. She hangs the bird outside where there is a little sun, and I say to her, 'Anna, you better put yourself in the sun'; and she say to me, 'Rosa, I wish I could! I wish I could!'—like that. Well, then I say, 'Come with me and work no more a little, and I will take care of you, like that time at the Signor Barron's.' But I know when I say 'a little' that she will work no more again ever. You remember Anna, *signore*? She was not beautiful, but she is beautiful now, like a china cup when you see the light shine through it. Well, she will not go with me—she is so proud!—but that night a little boy comes to tell me she is very sick. Angelo and I bring her home the next day; and here, *signore*, she dies six weeks after, in that little room which you see, where the window is open."

Flowers nodded against the casement and a white curtain stirred in and out, as the breeze drew it. Within, Barron saw a smooth, white bed. Imagination pictured Jane's face on the pillow. He turned toward Rosa's eloquent, brimming eyes the impassive countenance he could wear on occasion.

"It is a pretty room, Rosa. I am glad that she could—be there."

"Yes, *signore*; she was very happy, or so she say to me. She say to me, 'Rosa, it is so good to die, so good!' I say to her, 'But you are young to die, Anna. Is there no brother, no sister, no one in the world who loves you?' And she say to me, 'Not one.' You know Angelo—how big and strong he is, like a blacksmith? Well, he cries all the time, like a little boy. He lifts her up and down, the same as she was his own child; and every day he says, 'Anna, are you better?' and always she says, 'Yes, Angelo, much better. I shall be well soon.' In the evenings and on Sunday, when he is

at home, he plays for her on the violin. She likes that, but always her eyes are shut and she says nothing. If he stops she says, 'Play,' and smiles, but does not open her eyes. Sometimes when she lies so, with the eyes closed, we see the tears come down her cheek; first one, then another; and Angelo puts down the violin and looks at me, all frightened and sorry, like a child; but she opens her eyes then and smiles and says, 'Play, Angelo, play always; play even when you think I do not hear.' By and bye she can smile no more and speak no more. When we look at her we think she does not hear or know, but still Angelo plays the same. All day she lies like one dead, but when the violin begins at night comes a change on the face. I cannot say what it is; it is like light!

"In February she dies; two years yesterday. It is warm like today—like that night, *signore*, when you have the party in the old house. The doctor has say she will not live till morning, so Angelo comes home early from Maggetti's and sits down by that open window—it is open then, too—and plays very soft in the moonlight. By and bye I say, 'Oh, Angelo, it is too late!

She does not hear. It is better that we pray for her soul than to make music for her ear.' But Angelo will not stop. He says, 'You pray, Rosa. I play, like she asked me.' By and bye he begins that tune which the great Marescalchi plays at your house that night. I cannot tell the name; Angelo will know; but it is very beautiful, very sad, and breaks the heart to listen. It is strange that he never plays that before to Anna! All at once, when the violin begins that tune, her face—I cannot say how it is, *signore*—it is not that the lips smile, but there comes such a look—like an angel!—and the eyes open wide. She does not see me, nor Angelo; we do not know what she sees. Who can tell, *signore*? For a long time there is this look on the face; it is strange to see such happiness when one dies. The doctor says, 'She goes easy. I am glad.' Afterward she sleeps a little, and once she says, 'Poor Ada!' It is some friend, perhaps, that she knew long ago. And once, *signore*, she speaks your name. You were kind to her, and she remembers. She died in her sleep, and we do not know—only that she wakes no more."



THE LESSON OF APRIL

SHE was a maid and I was a man,
And, in a springtime long ago,
When April had entered as April can,
In a glint of green and a rosy glow,
Under the changing skies we strolled,
Sunshine and rain above us played,
And the old, old tale was the one I told,
Since I was a man and she a maid.

Many and many a year has gone,
And April is smiling in tears again;
I am facing her fickle self, alone,
And proving her blandishments worse than vain;
Much shine and shower have served to let
My heart grow wise and my passion cool;
At length, I am even past regret
That she was a woman and I a fool!

NANNIE BYRD TURNER.

THE GODS OF HUNGER

By Inez Haynes Gillmore

EWELL VARIAN stopped banging his typewriter and collapsed limply for a few minutes. Then he arose, turned down the lamp and staggered out of the house. For a moment the acrid night air seemed to revive him. He drew in long breaths of its moist abundance.

It had stopped raining long ago, but there were generous puddles everywhere. A fine mist that the misshapen late moon was turning to a wash of silver exuded from the circumscribing marsh. Of the deserted distance—except in a single direction—it made infinities. Where the city lay, myriads of lights, like a heap of huge diamonds, glittered through its delicate film.

Varian leaned against the stone wall and gave himself up to the feeling of lassitude that again began insidiously to envelop him. His head wobbled loosely, his arms hung pendulous, his eyes half closed.

Mysteriously from off in the distance something obtruded on his absorption. It was at first a ghost of a sound, an almost unsensed vibratory disturbance of the air; but gradually it grew in bulk until it became a soft, low hum, like the susurrus of a monster bee.

At last an automobile appeared and coursed swiftly toward him. Varian jerked himself into life again and watched its approach.

It was a small machine. There was one person in it, a woman. She wore a long enveloping cape. A pointed medieval hood covered her head, and over her eyes was a tiny black lace masque. She did not look in his direction, and Varian stared, in consequence, without consciousness of rudeness, at this unexpected vision of the night.

And then suddenly something happened—how or why he had at the moment not the faintest idea. But the automobile emitted a querulous complaint that was a cough, a howl and a whistle all in one, and, stopping short, slewed uncertainly an instant and then belched its occupant up into the air and down at his feet. There she lay silent.

By a tremendous effort he lifted her into his arms and zigzagged into the house. He had just the strength to carry her over to the couch. Then he reeled to the fireplace and touched off the logs that were piled there.

The woman had not stirred. He pushed the masque up on her forehead and bathed her face and wrists. Back of him the fire had begun to crackle briskly; its flames lighted the room. Varian had a confused impression of a pale face surrounded by a brush of black hair, of expanses of white satin spotted with big blue dots. As he bent over her there came to his nostrils successive whiffs of the pungent odor of dying violets.

He loosened her blouse at the neck and fanned her vigorously. He was beginning to despair at the sustained colorlessness of her rigid face, when suddenly her eyes opened, flashing a glance as keen as steel into his own anxious ones.

"You were thrown from your automobile," he hastened to explain as, without speaking, she seemed collectedly to try to account for the situation. "You are in the old Loudenoys house."

"Oh, I remember!" She laughed weakly. "I saw more stars than ever before in my life. It was an astronomical marvel." She sat up and pushed

her hood off. With it came the short black wig that had completely disguised her. Varian uttered an exclamation that, quick as it was, was more quickly smothered. The girl, her awkward, shivering fingers busy with the unfastening of her masque, did not notice.

Varian pushed a big chair up to the fireplace. "Come nearer the fire. It will be warmer and lighter presently." He turned to the lamp.

The girl had started to cross the room. "Oh, don't light the lamp," she begged; but as she spoke its sudden flame burst vividly upon her.

"You see," she explained limply, "I've been to a masquerade."

She was in the costume of a Pierrot, a full blouse and full trousers, ending at the neck, ankles and wrists in ruffs of heavy lace. Big blue satin buttons gave it an eccentric accent. At her waist was an enormous bunch of violets. Her standing position and the candid disclosures of her boyish costume revealed a figure that was an alluring combination of strength and delicacy. She was broad-shouldered and slender-waisted, with long, sinewy limbs. The sum total of her features made for little beauty—indeed, they would have been almost plain but for some single quality of piquancy that came gallantly to the rescue of each one of them. Her cheeks were dotted with freckles, but they lay like drops of honey on a skin that was warmly pale. Her eyes were of ordinary shape and size, but they were of a radiant, carrying blue, with accessories of coquettish lid and golden eyelash. Her mouth, frankly large, rippled away from an uplifted centre to sunken pools of shadow at the corners.

The few steps that she took shook the knot of hair off her head. It slid down by her ear, still held by the faithful hairpins, and hung there, a knob of solid gold, making a grotesque of her saucy profile. Suddenly she swayed. Varian rushed to her side and guided her to the chair. She sank into it with a sigh of relief, leaning back and closing her eyes.

"It made your head swim to get up

so quickly," he encouraged her. "It will last only a minute."

"This is the first time I ever went to pieces in my life. I don't like the sensation." She pulled herself up again with another spurt of vigor. "Also, I'm ashamed of myself."

She began to pull the pins out of her hair. It fell in a crinkled mass halfway to her waist. She shook it out, threw it over one shoulder and began to comb its snarled abundance with her little fingers. Afterward she pulled it up again on to the top of her head, whirling it into a knot there and dragging at it until a lustrous wave seceded from the rest and scooped over her forehead. All this took several minutes. Varian watched in silence.

"Now," she said crisply, "tell me the worst—you don't have to break it gently to me. Where am I? Whose house is this? How far am I from Boston? How can I get back? Have I got to get into the papers—and what's your name?"

"My name is Ewell Varian. I live alone in this house. It is a tumble-down old place with the reputation of being haunted. It is three miles from Mauldon in one direction and two from Compford in the other. I will walk over to Compford presently and telephone for you. There is no possibility of your getting into the papers unless your people become alarmed and go to the police."

The girl's lips trembled into laughter. "They won't do that—whatever they do. They'll stew and fry and sizzle in anxiety, but they'll keep quiet. Do you know, Mr. Varian, that a reputation for daredeviltry is the cheapest investment you can possibly make? They take it for granted that you will never do anything in the regular way." She paused and thought hard. "It's about two, isn't it? Can I get back to Boston by six to-mor—this morning?"

"Easily."

She breathed a relieved sigh. Then she arose and leisurely sauntered about the room, examining its every nook and corner, her hands thrust deep into

the pockets of her satin trousers. "Did you ever see the ghost?"

"Not until tonight."

Another trill of laughter fell from her lips. "I don't suppose a female ghost in trousers was ever heard of. You would expect something of this place, though. Jolly, it's uncanny! It looks as if an artist with the D. T.'s had decorated it."

It was one of the spacious, high-studded drawing-rooms of half a century ago. Six long windows opened on to the wide veranda. Big breaks in the plastering, huge stains on the paper and curtains formed into a dado of Doré-like grotesques, scurrying in an eternal chase of one another. The wavering firelight caused them to bulge plethorically forward into prominence and then dwindle back into gloom again. In one corner was the couch heaped tidily with bedding. Against a wall was a long wide table of amateur make, holding a typewriter and a confused litter of paper.

Varian's eyes followed the unhurrying figure of his chance companion. The centre of the room was fairly light, but the corners were in darkness. She became a mere silvery blur as she entered these areas. At the table she stopped to light one of the cigarettes that were scattered there. Then she leaned forward with an amused exclamation.

Mounted on cards were a half-dozen newspaper and magazine pictures of a very pretty girl in golf and riding costume and in evening dress. That girl was herself. She examined them leisurely, permitting, from time to time, a round of smoke to issue from her cup-like lips. Then she shot an amused glance in their owner's direction.

"You're caught with the goods this time, all right," she suggested.

The firelight played up brightly at that instant, revealing a slow-moving tide that crept darkly to the seam of Varian's hair. The girl, with perfect calmness, took advantage of the opportunity to examine him interestedly.

Sitting, he seemed a big man. His

figure gave an effect of potential strength that was underlined, as it were, by his dark, square-cut features and the look of resolution, almost boding in its effect of concentration, that strengthened them. For the rest he had gray eyes, set deeply in gaunt, purplish shadows, hair of such abundance that it would have seemed unmanageable if it had not been glossy as satin, a thickly ridged skin the color and consistency of brown wax, and a mouth rather finely molded, reinforcing a strong chin.

"I hope it doesn't annoy you, Miss Hurdon," he said, with a fair degree of composure.

"Not an atom," that lady announced cheerfully. "On the contrary, so long as you know all about me and the intricacies of my fell career, I think I'll tell you the kind of scrape I'm in at present and let you get me out of it. The facts of the matter are— Will you tell me first, though," she broke off, with dizzying feminine inconsequence, "how you happen to be living all alone in this old place?" She came back and seated herself on an arm of the big chair, sitting spiritedly straight on one satin leg and smoothing the protruding foot with her little brown hand. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"Writing plays."

"Do you write plays all day?"

"Yes, and all night."

"Don't you do anything else?"

"No."

"What do you live on?"

"Oh, I have a little money."

"How much is a little?"

"Enough to last me with due economy three years more."

"How long have you been living here?"

"Two years."

His companion fixed the look that frowned out of her blue eyes directly on his face. She had paid him the compliment of not once drawing at the cigarette that wasted between her brown fingers. "Do you ever eat?"

"Frequently."

"When you think of it, I suppose?"

"Precisely."

"You look like it." Her tone was scathing. "Seedy as the deuce! I bet I could lick you single-handed."

"Do you want to try?"

"How many plays have you written?"

He nodded in the direction of the trunk. "It's full," he admitted.

"And all rotten, I suppose."

"Putrid—that is, all except one," he added conscientiously.

Her cigarette-end blazed under her strenuous attack. "Don't you ever see anybody?"

"No. I know nobody—and then I can't afford clothes. Of course I know the slums and all the inhabitants thereof. I dog a manager and shadow a star whenever I can find one. And, of course, I go to the theatre when I think there's a play running that's better than I could write. That's not often, naturally. It has been my pleasure occasionally to gaze down from the second balcony on Miss Guenneth Hurdon in all her splendor on the floor. And afterward I have watched her to her carriage."

"That's where I've seen him," she explained mutteringly to herself. "Do you send the plays to managers?"

"Bless you, yes."

"And what do they say?"

"Nothing." His tone was cheerful.

She threw her cigarette-end into the fireplace. Her expression amounted to a great deal of caustic comment.

"The boy who sometimes brings my mail left them. Let me lend you a pipe?" He made as if to rise.

Her gesture stopped him. "I haven't smoked a pipe since I was sixteen," she admitted humbly. "What else do you do besides slumming and writing bad plays?"

"I take long lonesome walks and dream long lonesome dreams."

"What about?"

"Of the time when my fame is so great and my royalties so big that I can command the society of Miss Guenneth Hurdon and her friends."

"You're not going to tell me you're in love with me."

"You take the words out of my mouth."

She pondered this gravely. "I never had one of those unknown freak lovers before. Molly did. He wrote her anonymous letters and threatened to shoot her. They had to have him arrested finally."

"I'll promise to do none of those things."

"That's nice, because, you see, I'm already engaged."

"I hadn't heard."

"Nobody has—I'm telling you because I need help. What are those things?" Her quick little hand waved in the direction of the fireplace.

"Gods of hunger—Indian gods." Varian took from their places a pair of Santa Clara gargoyles that squatted one at either end of the mantel, and deposited them in her lap. They were made of a black, brittle substance. Their features were red gashes, drawn into an expression of excruciating suffering. Their agonized hands tore at their starved bodies.

"Why do you have them? You don't seem to go in for bric-à-brac."

He smiled at her. Then his face took a serious look.

"I wonder if I could make her understand," he meditated brazenly. "I'm afraid she's too young—she's so much younger than her probable four-and-twenty. Well, here goes in words of one syllable." He looked up suddenly. "I keep them because, so far as I have any, these are the gods of my idolatry. I worship them because I think they will, in the end, give me success. All the libation I can offer them is hunger, and I do offer that every day. I have a feeling that what of hunger I sacrifice to them in these long years of work will be returned to me later in long years of happiness. I keep them where I can easily see them because they are visible symbols of my ambition. They help me to work and hope."

She had listened interestedly, her eyes on his. Some inner feeling made them grow big and deep for an instant. She held out her hand.

"By Jove, you are a plucky one!" she said heartily.

"Now what can I do for you?"

She yawned. "Get me one of those straw-matting cigarettes," she said resignedly, "and I'll tell you."

She disdained the match that he found for her. Instead, she slipped off her chair, flat on to the floor, and lit it at the fire. Then she sat up cross-legged on the hearth.

"In the first place," was her serene disclosure, "I'm on my way to meet a man and elope with him. I've been engaged to him secretly for a long time. My family do not approve of him and there's been the deuce to pay for over two years. He's been urging me to run away for months. I didn't want to elope because Molly Neggleby and I made a vow once that we'd have the two most original weddings in our set. Do you remember Molly's?"

Varian nodded. "I saw you in your maid-of-honor gown for a second at the door."

"The whole procession, you know, cakewalked the last half of the recessional. That was pretty clever. Of course, there was no end of talk, but I was determined to beat it. My scheme was to be married out of doors at Idlehour. I was going to have Scotch bagpipes for music and the bridesmaids were all to carry toy balloons. What do you think of that?"

Varian's hand covered his eyes. "I can't think." His tone sounded dazed.

"Well, that's why eloping did not particularly appeal to me; but he—the man—was determined upon it. He's been bothering me to death. He's engaged in some business deal that will compel him, it is likely, to leave the country at any moment. Tonight he called me up on the 'phone, when I was at the Torreys' masquerade in Brookline, and told me that he was sailing tomorrow—that's today, of course—and if I'd come to his rooms before six in the morning, he'd have a justice of the peace there. At first I thought I couldn't. And then I thought it would beat Molly's wedding,

hands down. What do you think of a Pierrot costume for a wedding dress? That beats Molly!"

He did not answer for several seconds. "Yes, that beats Molly," he parroted at last. "I'll go immediately. He will worry."

"Worry! Not he!" she declared cheerfully. "He knows me better than that. He knows that if I've started I'm bound to arrive sooner or later." She followed with her eyes Varian's progress to the table where his hat lay. "But I'd like to have him get here as soon as possible. He'll auto out immediately, and he'll know what to do with the runabout. His number's 4567 Main. He's Bedington Carter."

Varian started. With his hand reaching upward he stood motionless for a second. Then he withdrew it and walked quietly to each of the six windows and locked them. Guenneth Hurdon watched him mechanically. The expression on her face did not change until, still quietly, he had locked the door and pocketed the key. Then she jumped to her feet.

"What are you doing?" she demanded sharply.

The face he turned to her was pale but steady. "I'm very sorry to seem as if I were determined to run your affairs, Miss Hurdon, but I might as well tell you now as later that I have no intention of letting you go to Bedington Carter's rooms. To prevent that I shall keep you here tonight."

She stared at him, her jaw a little dropped. "Keep me here tonight!" she repeated stupidly. "Oh, I'm sure this is a joke." She regained imperious command of herself. "I really am worried and flurried; please hurry."

"I cannot let you go," he reiterated.

She stared hard at him, and suddenly her face paled and wrinkled into a mad crumple of fear.

"Oh, I'm as sane as you are," he laughed. "You're perfectly safe."

She gulped and controlled herself. "Why won't you let me go?" she asked.

"I can't tell you why."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I am not absolutely certain that I am justified in this procedure—if I am, you will know soon enough."

"And if you're not?"

"It will make no difference. Only I think Mr. Carter will not take that hurried trip out of the country."

The scene that followed was one that recurs periodically in the drama of the day—the scene in which the pretty heroine attempts to cajole the immovable hero. Miss Hurdon apparently had a skilled knowledge of the whole category of feminine wiles. On Varian she turned entreaties, commands, anger and scorn, bewitching smiles, vixenish oburgations, showers of tears and volleys of breathy, long-sustained sobs.

"Will you tell me," she taxed him at last, "how you dare to meddle with my affairs?"

"I have been in love with you for three years," Varian apprised her simply. "That carries a kind of right to guardianship. Don't you think so?"

Miss Hurdon beat her armchair with her little clenched fist in an exasperation apparently too deep for words. "What rot!" she at last managed to ejaculate. "A dozen men have been in love with me. Do you consider that they also are my guardians?"

"If they love you as much as I do." Varian's air was decisive.

"Well, there's no need of prolonging this discussion," she said finally. "I'm going to sleep now. When you're ready to let me go home, kindly wake me."

She rolled herself up on the couch. Her manner was cool but her hands still trembled with anger. For a few minutes there was in the room only the sound of their united breathing. Varian piled the fire high. Then he pulled his chair nearer his companion. She gave no evidence that she had noticed this, but he did not push away. Instead, he moved even a little closer, and for three hours he told her things.

At eight he tiptoed out of the house. At nine he returned with the carriage.

When he awoke her she wrapped herself in her cape without speaking. He followed her out.

"Guenneth," he said, leaning over her, "if you ever need me for any kind of service, remember that I shall always be here in this old house and that you may command me."

She turned her head away and remained contemptuously silent. He waited, but she said nothing. The carriage started. "I'm giving you something to take care of you," he added softly. "You need help in that matter, you know," and before he closed the door he dropped the something into her lap. It was a little god of hunger.

He went back into the hovel. In the brilliant sunlight the room looked desolate and squalid, his face pale and haggard. On the couch lay a big bunch of faded violets. He seized them and thrust them down into the ash of the expiring fire. Suddenly there was a sound back of him. He turned quickly. The boy who brought his mail had come in unobserved. The letter that he held out to Varian bore a New York postmark.

The Boston papers that morning rang with the sensation made by an unsavory suit for breach of promise brought against Bedington Carter. The following Sunday they announced that Miss Guenneth Hurdon had gone for an extended trip abroad. The same issue stated casually that "The Turtle Doves" had been taken off the boards of a prominent New York theatre and a play by an unknown American dramatist, Mr. Ewell Varian, was to be produced the following week.

Three years later, in the garden of the old Loudenoys house, Ewell Varian sat smoking. Before him stretched a carpet of green that sank in a gentle slope to the agate-colored surface of a little shaded pond. Beyond that, in a confusion that resulted somehow in a graceful quaintness, grew an old-fashioned garden, an orchard of gnarled apple trees and a grapevine that sprawled over a rustic arbor. Through

the fret of the tangled green there was an occasional soft intrusion of the high gray stone wall that bounded all this. Varian's eyes roved unseeingly from point to point as, stretched in a steamer-chair, he assailed the fresh air with a steady stream of smoke from his pipe.

A manservant entered from somewhere back of him. "A lady to see you, sir," he announced imperturbably.

Varian removed his pipe and stared blankly. "A lady, Peter!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir."

"What's her name?"

"She wouldn't give it, sir."

"What does she want?"

"She didn't say, sir." Peter coughed drily. "It's a young lady, sir."

"All right, Peter."

Varian gave a comprehensive glance at his spotless flannels. Then he walked into the house through the long hall that led to the front drawing-room. On entering his gaze flew with the inevitability of long habit to the mantel opposite the door where it eternally found the sole bit of decoration there, the convulsed figure of a little god of hunger. Mechanically his eye followed the mantel's smooth bare surface to its other end where once, three years ago, its mate had squatted in an agony equally dire. He started and his face paled. *The other god of hunger had come back.*

He strode swiftly into the room. Guenneth Hurdon arose at his entrance, and they faced each other.

The difference that the three years had made in him was a matter of mere externals. His glossy jet-black hair had grayed at the temples. His skin was less the color of brown wax and wholesomely closer to that of an antique bronze. His face was no longer gaunt. In its place, and forming a picturesque combination with his bod- ing air of resolution, was a look of growing physical vigor.

She was almost a different woman. Her eyes had grown bigger and deeper. If they seemed to have lost some of their insistent blue, they had gained in

luminousness. In repose her mouth drooped a little. Her figure was more developed and less muscular. She wore a gown that was mainly of white with little bewildering dashes of black, a big black hat of the plumed and picture order and an astounding parasol.

"I have been home a week," she announced simply.

"Yes, I know that. Won't you sit down again?"

She reseated herself. "I should have come before, but I didn't know where you were. I found I hadn't the remotest idea where this old house was. I have been autoing in this vicinity like mad trying to find it. If I had not read a profusely illustrated account in the *Two Worlds* of the restoration of the old Loudenoys house by the clever young dramatist, Ewell Varian, I should never have known where you were."

He did not answer. He hardly seemed to listen. His intent gaze drank her down to the dregs.

"So you're famous?" she accused him.

"Not very," he qualified smilingly.

"And rich? The *Two Worlds*—"

He laughed amusedly. "Ever since I bought this old place for the traditional song and put it into order with the help of my one man I have been called rich. I fancy I earn the salary of a good bookkeeper."

"Have you sold all the plays?" She nodded her vivid head toward the corner where once the trunk stood.

He laughed. "Those were burned up long ago."

"Was it the single good play that made your fortune?"

"Bless you, no; I have never been able to dispose of that. Didn't I tell you it was a good play?"

"Was the first play a success?"

"Success! It ran a week, and seventy-nine people came to see it. I counted them."

"Which one—?"

"A rural comedy."

"Grandpa's farm sort of thing?"

"Exactly."

"I suppose the betrayed heroine came home in a snowstorm?"

"Of course she did. How else could she come home, pray?"

"Have you written a Civil War drama yet?"

"No, but I'm going to."

"The first act will be in a camp—everybody is drinking whisky——"

"Of course."

"There will be a stern, white-haired Northern general, who growls when he talks."

"Of course."

"He will be playing chess when the curtain goes up—gnawing constantly at his close-cropped white mustache."

"Of course."

"His son is in love with a Southern girl. One of the prisoners is enamoured of his daughter, and his wife—who is ages younger than he—is being pursued by the villain, who is a spy."

"Of course. Won't you collaborate with me? You've really saved me all the work of my first scenario."

She sighed an exaggerated sigh of relief. "Now I know you're bound to make money. I've worried so much about you. Doesn't it seem nice to have something to eat occasionally?"

"I'm just becoming accustomed to it, though even now I can't wantonly waste my food. The doctors say I shall never really have a stomach again."

Her eyes roved. "I can't get used to this room." She bit at the discontented curve that her underlip had suddenly taken. "Colonial furniture and Japanese prints, like a million other places. It was nicer before."

"It shall be changed, if you desire."

"No—not that. . . . How did you happen to know that that breach of promise suit was to be brought

against Bedington Carter?" she demanded, out of a clear sky.

"I think I told you—didn't I?—that I knew many of the dives of the Boston slums. I had heard the suit discussed in one of them by the sister of the woman."

"I have never thanked you—but let's not go into that."

Varian smiled.

"Did you know that I was nearly married in England?" she charged him.

"Yes. Why didn't you marry him?"

"The little god wouldn't let me."

"Also, I read of your French and Italian adventurers. Why didn't you marry them?"

"I thought of it, but he wouldn't let me."

"What did you come back to America for?"

"He made me. He said I owed you a party call."

They looked steadfastly into each other's eyes. What they saw filled his face with triumphant happiness and hers with the soft flood of her unexpected confusion.

"I think I will be going now," she suggested.

He did not attempt to stay her. But he turned away for his hat and followed her to her carriage.

"You don't seem so anxious to keep me this time," she flashed out at him, her foot on the step.

"No, because this time I'm going with you."

She did not demur, and he seated himself at her side. Under the billowy parasol that lay in her lap his fingers clasped hers. There they encountered something—a brittle, bulky object. It was a little god of hunger.



WHEN ALIMONY CEASES

BBLACK—Westley seems to be celebrating today. Is he going to be married again?

WHITE—No. His ex-wife is.

HARMAR

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

“**T**HEN you knew Harmar, M. Du Barras?” The colonel, aroused from polite boredom, leaned across the table. “A very interesting case, very interesting indeed.”

The Frenchman accorded the colonel a rather quizzical stare. He was in process of being lionized, and had, one felt, a considerable contempt for the mentality of the company in general.

“Yes,” he answered, pronouncing with the precision of one who is sure of a language but not at ease in it. “Yes, Colonel Beveridge; I knew Harmar.” His glance swept the opposite side of the table, and rested perceptibly, it seemed to me, on Florence Burton, who sat at my left.

“Ah,” pursued the colonel, whose branch was cavalry, and heavy cavalry at that. “Before, or after, may I ask?”

Du Barras moved a fork irritably. “I knew him in the Indies,” he said, and turned to the lady on his right with the obvious intention of changing the subject. The colonel, however, was not to be sidetracked.

“Can it be,” he urged, “that you are the man who was *with* Harmar? Who played, one might say, Carnehan to his Dravot?” The colonel was proud of his familiarity with Kipling, and obtruded it with a tactlessness which did credit to the strenuousness of the original.

“Yes,” said Du Barras again, “I am the man.”

“Then,” exclaimed the colonel, “why haven’t you written of your experiences? Surely such a story would make interesting reading.”

The Frenchman regarded his big

interlocutor from between narrowed lids. There was a hard glitter in his small eyes. “That story will never be written,” he said. “*On n’écrit pas la vérité, hein?*”

The colonel was blissfully unconscious of the covert insult in the last word, but he dropped the subject, to the evident relief of our hostess, Mrs. St. Clair. I don’t think she knew why a discussion of Harmar was out of place, but she was quick enough to see that it was. As for me, I wondered how much Du Barras knew. I was in a fair way of finding out, for the colonel, undaunted, returned to the charge when the ladies had left us.

“How do you account, M. Du Barras,” he asked, lighting his cigar, “for a man of university training going off and burying himself in that way among savages; becoming, as I understand, one of them?”

“Why,” broke in St. Clair, “the case is common enough, isn’t it? There were white men fighting with the American Indians, weren’t there, colonel? Renegades, and deserters, and that sort of thing?”

“Exactly,” said the colonel portentously. “Renegades, and deserters, and that sort of thing. But Harmar wasn’t a renegade nor a deserter; he was a Harvard man.” He looked challengingly around the circle.

Boltby, the journalist, laughed. “Plenty of college men go to the bad,” said he. “There’s a crew man from one of the big universities singing on the New York streets for pennies today—if he isn’t dead.”

“I know, I know,” said the colonel impatiently. “But Harmar wasn’t

that kind. He was a man, Harmar was. How do you account for it, M. Du Barras?"

"You forget, I think," the Frenchman said quietly, "that I also buried myself among savages."

The colonel was rebuffed, but not beaten off. "Quite so," he said, "quite so. But you, M. Du Barras, were acting, I take it, in the interests of science. You are a professional traveler." He waved his hand grandiloquently.

"That is true," said Du Barras. "I am a professional traveler, and Harmar was—my friend."

Anyone but a fool or the colonel would have stopped then; but nothing short of a cannon-ball would stop the colonel. "Just so," said he, "and, as his friend, you must have had the best opportunities of observing him. Why did he go out there? Was it a woman?"

Boltby struck in. "My dear colonel, a full-grown man, such as you describe, doesn't do such things for such a reason, nowadays, except in fiction." I felt a desire to shake Boltby by the hand, though I had always disliked him cordially.

Du Barras again directed that peculiar narrow-lidded look at the colonel. "It was not a woman," he said, and I saw his teeth shut down on the end of his cigar.

St. Clair came to the front, with an amiable desire to clear the air. "It must have been a queer sort of world he lived in," said he. "He was a kind of king there, wasn't he?"

"Yes," answered Du Barras; "a king, and a child, and the bravest man I ever knew." He leaned back in his chair and smiled for the first time. "The bravest man I ever knew," he repeated. "When the Dutch landed, and old Pe-paw-quan suspected him of treachery, he said: 'You can kill me when you like, but I'll drive out those stodgy fools first!' He did it, too, with the fear of a poisoned dart in the back on him all the time. They made him king after that. . . . But he was a child, and had no sense of proportion. A child he was, and let things trouble

him that would not have annoyed most men."

"It must have been rather a decent life, in a way," ventured young Hathaway, who had not spoken before. "The ease, and the quiet and the monarch-of-all-you-survey business, you know."

Du Barras looked at him grimly, then stared down at his cigar. "Yes," he replied deliberately, "it was a fine life, in a way. It was dirty, and sleepy, and full of insects, and one never knew when one's neighbor was going to stick a kris into one, or poison one's fish. Yes, it was a fine life for a man like Harmar. . . . Then there was old Pe-paw-quan and his daughter Ia——"

"Ah!" interjected the colonel softly. "Then there *was* a woman."

"Of a kind," said the Frenchman. "Would you like to see something of her?" He fished in the pocket of his dress-coat, and flung an object upon the white cloth, among the ash-trays. It fell with a little thud, rolled over, and lay palm upward—a woman's hand severed at the wrist.

"That," remarked Du Barras, "is the right hand of the Princess Ia. Her royal father sent it to us, when he captured her, and said that more would follow. She sided with us, against him, you know. Harmar was her man, according to their rites."

We bent over the gruesome little thing with a curiosity in which there was some Anglo-Saxon shrinking. It was a strange thing to see, there among the silver and winking glass. The hand was shriveled, of course, but one could see that it had been shapely. The fingers were comparatively long and the nails oval. Boothby picked it up gingerly, and let it drop almost as soon as he had it.

"Ugh!" he said. "The thing gives me the creeps; and I've been a reporter, too. Do you carry it about with you habitually, M. Du Barras?"

Du Barras laughed and replaced the hand in his pocket. "No," said he, "not habitually. It is not, as you might say, a cheerful pocket-piece. It did not bring luck to her who had it

first, nor to Harmar, nor to me, and I have had it since those two died." He laughed again, harshly, and there was silence for a moment.

"How did Harmar die?" asked Hathaway at last.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. "Eh, as other men die, I suppose," said he. "Crying to the good God to give them peace."

"Shall we join the ladies?" suggested St. Clair after another pause.

As we entered the drawing-room Mrs. St. Clair gave me tacitly to understand that I was to engage Madame Du Barras in conversation. Madame spoke nothing but French, and it had evidently put a strain on the hostess to meet her on her own ground. I suppose one reason why educated foreigners despise us is that such of them as are persuaded to come to America find us linguistically so ignorant. Madame Du Barras was a somewhat heavy person, I discovered, and, as my own French is none too fluent, our conversation languished. I looked around in vain for Florence Burton, who alone of those present would have been capable of arousing madame to anything like enthusiasm; she seemed to have disappeared at the entrance of the men.

After what madame herself probably later described to her husband as a *mauvais quart d'heure*, I escaped, on some pretext or other, and wandered in the general direction of the conservatory; one does pretty much as one likes at the St. Clairs'. After several stops I arrived at the conservatory doorway, and, hearing voices, was about to turn back when Florence Burton leaned forward from behind a screen of fernery and hailed me.

"Come in, Jack," said she, "and help us discuss 'Shakespeare and the musical glasses.'"

I was not especially desirous of interrupting one of Florence's tête-à-têtes, but there was an urgent tone in the invitation which lifted it above the casual, and I entered. Florence and M. Du Barras were sitting on a settee built to accommodate two behind the ferns, and the situation was a trifle awkward.

The Frenchman, however, after a few commonplaces, muttered a conventional excuse and departed.

"He wasn't miffed, was he?" I asked, as I dropped down beside Florence on the settee.

"Jack," said she, "that man is a devil."

"Oh, come now," I said, "not so bad as that!"

She did not smile. "I mean it," she said. "You don't understand. He's been telling me about Stephen Harmar—how he died."

"Oh," said I. I stole a glance at her profile and noted, as I had not before, that she was unusually pale.

"It was horrible," she went on, "simply horrible. He described it in French, the fighting, and the fire and the things they did to him—to Harmar, I mean. I never ought to have listened, but somehow I couldn't stop him until you came. Oh, it was ghastly! . . . Jack," she broke off with sudden insistence, "you must help me get away—now, this moment! You simply must! I've got to be alone." And she gripped my wrist so hard that it hurt.

"All right," I said. "All right. But for heaven's sake keep cool, Florence!"

"You don't understand," she repeated dully. "He told me about Harmar."

I did the necessary talking, and got her into a carriage. During the drive she was silent and sat staring out into the misty night. At a corner somewhere in the Eighties a man lurched out of the murky area of a gaslight and fell almost under our carriage wheels, but she did not speak nor change her position. It was not until we stopped at her house that she spoke. As the door was flung open she started, as if from a dream, and said shortly, "Come in, please; I don't think I want to be alone, after all."

I trailed, rather reluctantly. She led me to the White Room, had all the lights turned on and dropped into a big chair before the open fire, with the almost feline grace which was a part of her. The house was intensely still, and

the silence, coupled with the glare of electric light on the white walls, began to get on my nerves. It was out of the question, by then, to return to the St. Clairs', and I fell to thinking, with some impatience, of a rabbit at the club; I did not fancy particularly playing buffer to Florence Burton's moods. By and bye a log fell off the andirons and I poked it back somewhat savagely, sending a fusillade of sparks up the chimney. Florence shifted her position and sat looking at me, one cheek resting against the white bearskin that was thrown over the chair.

"You knew Harmar, didn't you?" she asked in a dead kind of voice.

"Yes," I answered, staring into the fire. "Yes, I knew Harmar."

She sat up with sudden irritability. "Heavens, Jack!" she exclaimed. "Can't you say anything but 'yes'? I shall go mad, I think."

I looked at her. "What do you want me to say? 'Yes' says everything, don't you think?"

She flushed angrily. "You're a nice lot, all of you," said she. "Was Harmar a god, that you worship him so?"

"Not a god, but too fine a man to be at the mercy of fools," I answered brutally.

"Don't you make allowance for mistakes?" she asked very low. "Have you *no* mercy, Jack?"

I jumped. I did not relish the personal note. What was the matter with the girl?

"Good Lord, Florence!" said I, "what have I got to do with it? I'm not a court of judgment."

"That speech is quite in keeping with you," she said. "'The woman tempted me.'"

"Ah? You go too fast, Florence; I don't follow."

She laughed scornfully, yet with a catch in her voice. "Listen, Jack. Do you remember that summer at the Harbor?"

"Yes, Florence," I answered; "I remember it with great distinctness. In fact, I had some difficulty in reducing it to a peaceful memory. You completed Nature's job in making a

fool of me very successfully, I should say. Nevertheless, you have my thanks, for the experience was a liberal education. Well?"

She looked at me strangely. "Do you mean to say you didn't know that I was engaged to Stephen Harmar at that time?"

The past rushed over me like a wave, and with the memory the hot blood leaped to my face.

"Before God, and as I hope to be considered a gentleman," I said, "I did not know it." I rose. "There's no more to be said, I think. You were engaged to Harmar, and played the devil with me. Harmar paid the fiddler, but the tune goes on. Good night, Florence; sweet dreams. And give my best wishes to the next lucky man! Good night."

She, too, had risen, and stood staring at me with wide, blank eyes. She let me get to the door, then, with a quick rush, reached me, and, before I could prevent her, dropped on her knees at my feet, grasping me about the waist.

"Wait, Jack, wait!" she panted. "Oh, you *must* wait! Listen, Jack!

. . . I never cared for Harmar; it was you all the time—you, and only you." She hid her face against me, still holding to me with that frenzied clutch, herself rigid. I remembered Harmar, that fine figure of a man, compared him with myself as I had been, callow, conceited, raw from college, and laughed.

"Get up," I said. "Is this part of the game?"

She leaned back, and turned a white face toward mine. "Are you blind?" she moaned. "Can't you see?"

I was not blind.

Of the half-hour which followed, I have little definite recollection. We sat before the fire, holding each other's hands, and using the broken speech which comes at moments of deepest feeling. There was no great need of speech of any kind between us; we knew ourselves too well. During that summer together at the Harbor we had learned many things, lightly, and now that the knowledge had been re-

vealed to each of us that with the other those things so lightly learned had come to dwell in heaviness and sorrow, there was little left to say. Of wild rapture over the discovery of enduring love there was none; rather we accepted swiftly the inevitable, our love and the shadow which lay over it, saying tacitly: "O Rose of All the World, thy perfume has departed, but thy petals with their glorious color remain. What if the color be red? Thou canst not withhold from us the crimson of thy petals, O Rose of All the World." So we sat before the fire in the White Room, holding each other's hands, and saying little, but conscious of all that is worth the knowing between man and woman.

At last, when the fire had burned down to embers, I asked Florence to tell me of Harmar's death; for of this one thing I was sure, that I must stop Du Barras's tongue before it had time to do further mischief, and, to that end, must find out how much he had already told. Slowly and haltingly, now in English, now in French, she told me the story as the Frenchman had told it to her, hiding nothing of tortures so horrible that no woman should dream, much less hear, of them.

"But I am not guilty of his death," she said finally, "for though he went away because I sent him, there was a woman on the island whom he grew to love more than he loved me. She was his wife, Du Barras said, and at the last he died for her. Her father, who was chief before Harmar came, promised to kill her if Harmar didn't give himself up. He sent——"

"Yes," I interrupted hurriedly, "I know what he sent. Go on."

She shuddered, and the pupils of her eyes grew black. "He gave himself up, and they did to him—what I've told you. He was half-mad with fever at the time, and most of the natives had deserted him; they got the idea that he was bewitched, or some such thing. I think he must have been quite mad, for he went down to the fire laugh-

ing, and talking some nonsense about going to his marriage bed, Du Barras said."

"What was Du Barras doing all this time?" I asked.

"I don't know. I asked him, and he laughed that snarling laugh of his, and said: 'There is no more island now, but only a shambles.' He's a terrible man, Jack; there's something cold about him. But he must have loved Harmar well."

"Very likely," I said. I saw that I must find the Frenchman soon.

The petty fate that rules one's comings and goings was kind to me. At the club, whither I repaired after leaving Florence, I found Boltby and Du Barras, sitting in a corner of the grill-room over Scotch-and-soda. The grill was closed, and the room was deserted, save for Boltby and his guest. A belated clicking of balls, followed by occasional wrathful remarks, came from the billiard-room, marking the progress of a couple of midnight devotees of the game, and from regions above snatches of late revelry and song sifted indefinitely down; otherwise, the club was silent, and the steps of the bebuttoned minion whom I summoned sounded profanely loud upon the tiled floor.

"Been explaining the American club system, Boltby?" I asked, as I drew up a chair with a noisy scraping which wrenched my nerves. "Pardon my butting in. What'll you take, M. Du Barras?"

Boltby looked at me curiously. "I'll take the same, since you ask," said he. "You look as if you'd been seeing spooks, Phelps. Better take a small glass of kummel; it's an excellent thing to settle the nerves. Eh, M. Du Barras?"

Du Barras turned his glass, holding it toward the light, and looking at it reflectively. "There is nothing to settle the nerves, save sleep and death," he said. "The one is difficult to woo, and we fear the other when we see it. This," he shook the glass in his hand gently, "is the pastime of fools, the refuge of the sleepless and

the solace of wise men. Is not that so, Mr. Phelps?"

"That includes most of the human race," cut in Boltby.

"Pardon," said the Frenchman. "It excludes the majority of the human race, who are neither wise men nor fools, nor yet sleepless, but are beetles crawling in a rut, of which the sides shut off both danger and escape."

"Why don't the beetles use their wings?" asked Boltby.

"They've forgotten that they had them," I said.

"Pardon again," said Du Barras. "They were never aware of their possession."

Boltby laughed and rose. "I'll leave the field to you two cynics," he said. "Excuse me for ten minutes; I've a letter to write. Look after M. Du Barras, will you, Phelps?" He departed in the direction of the reading-room, and there was silence for a moment.

"Don't you think that was rather a nasty thing to tell a woman?" I asked then. Du Barras continued to turn the glass in his hands; they were fine hands, wonderfully well shaped, yet strong. Suddenly he looked up.

"You are a brave man, Mr. Phelps," he said. "I have killed a man for a less insulting speech than that."

"We're not in the Indies," I returned. "You can spare me the heroes. Why did you tell Miss Burton about Harmar? We don't do that sort of thing here."

He continued to look at me, and his gaze did not waver. "I do not understand your Anglo-Saxon emotions," he said, "but that woman killed my friend Harmar as surely as if she had knifed him. It is good that she should suffer." He reached into the inside pockets of his coat, and pulled out a square of cardboard, which he extended toward me. "Look! I found this on Harmar's body when they had finished with him."

I took the card. It was charred at the edges, and warped, but there was enough of it left to let one distinguish the little photograph which was

pasted on it. The photograph was of Florence Burton, taken years before, when she was in the first blush of her beauty. There was something pathetic, as well as grotesque, aside from associations, in the little picture with its bygone fashions and the young girl smiling out with no hint of latent things. I turned its face down on my knee.

"Then he loved her all the time?" I asked.

Du Barras inclined his head. "That is why he went laughing to his death," he said. "He was weary and sick unto that death because of her. He went down to meet it like a bridegroom going to his bride, and as gladly."

"Then he was not mad with fever?"

"He was as sane as you or I."

"You didn't show her the photograph?" I said after a pause.

"I would not give her the satisfaction," he replied. "I let her think he died for the sake of the other woman. It is good that she should suffer," he repeated, "she who drove my friend Harmar to an evil death."

"You missed your mark," I said. "The only satisfaction she has is in thinking that he forgot his love for her."

The Frenchman's face darkened. "Give me the photograph!" he exclaimed.

"No," I answered. "It goes where Harmar went." I scratched a match and set the card aflame; it burned as things do which have felt the flame before.

"Dust and ashes," said Du Barras, as he watched it shrivel. "Dust and ashes. Harmar is gone, and the photograph is gone; what endures? Am I to congratulate you, monsieur?"

"As you please," I replied.

"Then I shall not congratulate you—too much," he said. He leaned forward. "Listen, my friend; I am going to tell you something. As I have said, I do not understand your Anglo-Saxon emotions, but you and I are of a kind. Harmar was different. He was a better man than either of us, but he was a fool. At times, mostly at sunset, when the long light came through the

trees and the island was so beautiful that one feared to be alive, he would go away by himself and sit on a hill where he could look out over the water and take out that photograph and talk to it. For hours at a time he would sit like that and talk to it, and when he came back to the village his face was that of a man who, living in hell, has seen heaven. Yes, his face was that of a dead man who must live on in hell. Even I, who fear neither man nor devil, and who loved him, was afraid of him at such times, for he had seen what I could not see; and as for the natives, they said that his god was a terrible god, and they shrank from him. They shrank from him, all but the woman who loved him and who understood. The fools! They paid for their folly." He poured out three fingers of whisky and laughed into the glass. "Yes, they paid; all that they had in the world they paid to me for Harmar's life." He laughed again, reached into his pocket and brought out the dead hand. "My friend, I am going to make you a pres-

ent. It has been with me since Harmar died; now it must pass to you. You will accept it?"

"I will accept it," I answered, and took up the hand.

"Good. When you are weary of the little song that love plays for men like you and me, come to me or send me the hand. Then I will tell you a story and we two will go forth on a search together. There are still things to be done by us. Do you understand?"

"I do not understand, but I will come," I said, "when that time comes."

"Again, good. The time will come."

We fell silent. Suddenly the big clock upstairs chimed the quarters and then struck twice dully, heavily. A moment later we heard Boltby descending the marble stairs from the reading-room. The Frenchman tapped me on the arm, and in his voice was the strange yearning that is the rare expression of love passing the love of woman.

"And Harmar?" he said.

I did not care to think of Harmar.



"I LAY MY LUTE BESIDE THY DOOR"

WHAT was it Colin gave to thee?—

A blossom from the hawthorn-tree?

A flower of song is all I own,

A little dreamland rose, half-blown.

Oh, deck thy tresses, I implore—

I lay my lute beside thy door!

What was it Damon sent to thee?—

A gleaming pearl from Eastern sea?

A gem of song is all I own,

A tiny, glistening, tear-stained stone.

Oh, wear it—'twill my peace restore—

I lay my lute beside thy door!

What was it Lubin brought to thee?—

A falcon from the dewy lea?

A bird of song is all I own,

And to thy heart it now has flown.

Oh, cage it, let it roam no more—

I lay my lute beside thy door!

CLARENCE URMY.

BUSINESS CHANCE

WHAT wondrous things they advertise
 To do for mortal man!
 They furnish artificial eyes
 On the instalment plan;
 They grow new hair upon your dome,
 Remove it from your lip,
 And give your nose that came from Rome
 A perfect Grecian tip.

The mole that makes its victim shun
 The low-necked evening waist
 They charm away, enabling one
 To show her shoulders chaste;
 The bulging ears by Nature cast
 From sugar-scoop designs,
 When trimmed and trussed, attain at last
 To purely classic lines.

They clarify the sallow skin
 Until the blushes show,
 Or tuck a dimple in your chin,
 At rates extremely low.
 Of slender figures carved from stout,
 Or bandy legs made straight,
 Or wrinkles wholly put to rout,
 The list is adequate.

But what we really need is not
 To make short people tall,
 Nor cures for moth and freckle-spot
 Within the reach of all.
 For some smooth genius yet to come
 An opening still remains:
 To fill the cranial vacuum
 With well-assorted brains.

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.



PREPARED

THE PARSON—Have you ever realized how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven?

THE MAGNATE—Yes, but it doesn't worry me a particle. All my money is in my wife's name.

TOM

Par Jacques Normand

MARIÉS depuis peu de mois, désireux d'étendre leurs belles relations, les jeunes époux Fréminet ne furent pas médiocrement flattés quand, vers la fin d'août, ils reçurent du baron et de la baronne de Précorbin une invitation à venir passer quarante-huit heures chez eux, à l'occasion de l'ouverture de la chasse.

Chasseur, le petit Fréminet ne l'était guère. Ses exploits en cette matière se bornaient à quelques coups de fusil de-ci de-là, et sans grand succès.

D'ailleurs, le général baron de Précorbin avait été son grand chef aux dernières manœuvres. Cette invitation prenait donc à ses yeux l'apparence d'un ordre supérieur.

Pas commode, le général. Parler bref, moustaches raides, cocardier fini. Mais cette rudesse ne tenait pas devant la baronne. Pas commode non plus, cette grande femme sèche, noire, osseuse, à moustaches, véritable cheval de bataille.

La veille du départ, une seule question restait pendante, question grave: emmènerait-on ou n'emmènerait-on pas Tom?

Tom était un grand chien marron, croisé *pointer* et Saint-Germain, d'un modèle superbe, supérieur comme nez, mais d'éducation cynégétique plus qu'incomplète. Un de ces chiens à effet qu'on admire avant une chasse, qu'on rosse pendant et qu'on vend après. Bon garçon d'ailleurs, sociable, caressant, affectueux—trop affectueux même—car il témoignait à Fréminet une tendresse telle qu'il en devenait insupportable, ne le quittant pas d'une seconde, toujours dans ses jambes, hurlant et gémissant dès qu'il n'était plus là. Pour éviter ces concerts agaçants, Fré-

minet avait dû laisser Tom pénétrer dans son intimité: Il avait ses entrées au salon, à la salle à manger; il couchait dans une pièce voisine de la chambre de son maître. Peu à peu, il était devenu chien d'appartement, choyé, caressé, engraisant déjà de façon inquiétante.

— Emmener Tom! mais tu n'y songes pas, ma chérie! disait Fréminet. Dans ces grandes chasses-là, un chien est plus nuisible qu'utile. Coureur comme il est, Tom ferait filer les perdreaux à un kilomètre. Non! non! je ne l'emmènerai pas!

— Un si beau chien! ripostait Mme Fréminet; tout le monde l'admirerait, te l'envierait! Voyons, mon ami! Avoir un chien de chasse superbe... et le laisser chez soi! C'est insensé!

— Et où le mettrons-nous, s'il te plaît, quand nous serons à Précorbin? Tu ne t'imagines pas qu'on le laissera entrer au salon? La générale a horreur des animaux et le général ne jure que par elle. Il faudra enfermer Tom au chenil, avec les autres chiens... Tu vois ça d'ici: Tom au chenil, avec d'autres chiens!

— Pourquoi pas?

— Et moi? Comment fera-t-il pour se passer de moi? Faudra-t-il que j'y aille aussi, au chenil, pour lui tenir compagnie?... Non! je n'emmènerai pas Tom!

— Mais, mon ami, ce qui l'exaspère, cette pauvre bête, c'est d'être seul. Dans le chenil, il y aura d'autres chiens. Il sera en société. Il aura vite fait connaissance.

— Non! Tom nous causerait mille ennuis. Il nous rendrait ridicules, grotesques... Ce serait une jolie entrée dans le monde!

— Je ne me soucie pas d'aller m'amuser, moi, pendant que cette pauvre bête restera ici seule à s'ennuyer! Je n'irai plutôt pas!

— Tu es folle!

— Et toi égoïste!...

— Germaine!

— Tu veux me faire de la peine!

— Germaine!

— Emmène-le donc, ce bon Tom!...

Vois! il nous regarde! il nous comprend!

En effet, assis sur son derrière, intrigué par les éclats de voix et les gestes, Tom regardait, écoutait... Chaque fois que son nom était prononcé, sa fine queue s'agitait d'un mouvement oscillatoire, râclant le tapis comme une brosse à enlever les miettes.

— Non! non! je ne l'emmènerai pas; c'est mon dernier mot!

Le dernier mot des hommes n'est souvent que l'avant-dernier, quand une femme se mêle de substituer l'un à l'autre, car le lendemain, les deux jeunes gens, irréprochablement mis, montaient dans le train à destination de Beaugency... avec Tom.

Ainsi que de coutume, le général baron de Précorbin avait invité les châtelains de son voisinage immédiat, cinq ou six au plus, mais tireurs de premier ordre. L'arrivée des petits Fréminet était attendue avec une curiosité où ne se mêlait, d'ailleurs, aucune sympathie.

Quand ils apparurent vers les cinq heures du soir, dans le landau qui avait été les chercher à la gare, la société solognote s'empressa sur le perron.

Sitôt la voiture arrêtée:

— Ah! vous avez amené un chien? fit la grosse voix du général.

Fréminet rougit jusqu'aux oreilles.

— Sage, au moins? Ne court pas? insista la terrible voix.

— Non, mon général.

— Nous verrons ça demain...

D'un bond, ennuyé de son immobilité prolongée, sans attendre même que la portière fût ouverte, Tom venait de bondir hors de la voiture, juste aux pieds de la générale. Elle se recula, pincée, écartant sa robe.

— Tom!... Tom!... veux-tu bien!... criaient à la fois les deux petits Fréminet, debout dans le landau, rouges comme des pivouines.

Heureux de se trouver en si brillante compagnie, libre de toute contrainte, Tom voulut manifester sa joie à la manière ordinaire des chiens. La robe de la générale lui parut sans doute de saveur particulière, il la flaira en amateur, et...

Fréminet, s'élançant de la voiture, le saisit au collier et put éviter cette insulte à l'armée.

Autoritaire et foudroyant, le regard de la générale s'était tourné vers son mari.

— Au chenil, cette bête! au chenil!

Un domestique s'avança et prit Tom par la laisse.

— Avec les autres chiens, s'il vous plaît! balbutia Mme Fréminet.

— Des chiens? Nous n'en avons pas, chère madame, fit le général. Ma femme les a en horreur... D'ailleurs, seule, la bête n'en sera que mieux...

Entraîné par le domestique vers les communs, Tom opposait une résistance énergique. Les pattes arc-boutées, le cou gonflé par le collier, les yeux hors de la tête et désespérément attachés sur son maître, il avait l'air d'une victime menée à l'abattoir. Il disparut cependant, tandis que les petits Fréminet, ahuris par cette arrivée ridicule, étaient cérémonieusement présentés aux hôtes du château.

A peine dans la chambre destinée au ménage, au rez-de-chaussée, Fréminet éclata:

— Je te l'avais bien dit. Nous allons avoir tous les ennuis du monde avec Tom!...

— Mais... mon ami...

— Cette arrivée! Nous avons été grotesques.

— Bah! maintenant...

— Maintenant? T'imagines-tu que tout est fini? Seul, dans ce chenil, il va hurler comme un diable!

— Non! non! Il va dormir toute la nuit.

Une cloche se mit à tinter avec une

voix enrouée. Fréminet regarda la pendule :

— Sept heures un quart ! Un quart d'heure pour nous habiller !... au galop ! au galop !

Ils furent prêts à la fin du second coup de cloche. On les attendait pour se mettre à table. La robe de la petite Fréminet devint le point de mire des regards des dames. Un observateur attentif eût remarqué que, par derrière, elle était agrafée de travers. De même, la cravate blanche de Fréminet était chiffonnée.

Le dîner, composé de plats solides, se passa sans encombre. On parla chasse, naturellement. Les petits Fréminet furent silencieux et sympathiques, et arrivaient presque à oublier Tom, quand, au dessert, pendant un moment de silence, un hurlement plaintif, prolongé, s'éleva dans la nuit et entra par les fenêtres ouvertes.

— Ah ! ah ! il paraît que votre bête ne se plaît pas à Précorbin ? fit la terrible voix du général.

— J'espère pour nos nerfs que cette musique ne va pas continuer, glapit la générale.

Un second hurlement s'éleva, plus long, plus désolé que le premier.

Fréminet s'était dressé.

— Si vous permettez, général, je vais aller...

— Non ! non ! laissez le brailler un peu... Il s'y fera. Il ne faut jamais céder, voyez-vous... Ainsi, moi, quand j'ai décidé une chose...

La générale se leva, coupant la parole à son mari. On passa au salon. Le cœur battant, l'oreille tendue du côté du chenil, comprenant à peine ce qui se disait autour d'eux, M. et Mme Fréminet étaient au supplice. Ils redoutaient un nouveau hurlement. Par bonheur, il n'en fut rien. On se dit bonsoir à dix heures et demie, heure militaire. Il fallait se préparer, par une bienfaisante nuit de sommeil, aux fatigues du lendemain.

Dans leurs lits jumeaux, les jeunes Fréminet sont rassurés.

— Bonne nuit, chérie ! murmure Fréminet.

— Bonne nuit ! susurre la jeune femme.

Et ils se sont tranquillement endormis.

Tout à coup, d'un mouvement, ils se dressent l'un et l'autre sur leur séant, terrifiés. Il leur semble entendre le même hurlement, plaintif et désespéré, le hurlement de Tom... Non ! ils ne se trompent pas ! C'est bien lui ! Seulement, cette fois, la voix est moins lointaine. Elle semble très près d'eux.

— L'animal ! il va réveiller toute la maison !... s'écrie Fréminet.

— Il s'est donc échappé du chenil ? interroge Mme Fréminet.

— On le dirait contre nos fenêtres.

— Il nous aura sentis ! Pauvre bête !

D'un bond, Fréminet saute de son lit, court à la fenêtre, l'ouvre... Une masse marron pénètre comme une trombe, manquant presque de le renverser... C'est Tom, essouffé, ahuri, la langue pendante, une corde rompue à son collier, poussant de petits gémisséments de satisfaction.

— Veux-tu te taire ? Veux-tu te taire !

Ah ! bien oui ! Est-ce qu'il comprend les convenances mondaines, le brave chien ? Il a retrouvé ses maîtres ; il les sent, il les tient, il les lèche, il saute sur les deux lits jumeaux...

— Gardons-la donc, la pauvre bête, conseille la petite Fréminet. Elle couchera sur le tapis, bien tranquille. Demain matin, à la première heure, tu iras la promener dans le parc...

— Mais si on se doute ? Si la terrible générale pense qu'un chien a passé la nuit dans son château, a dormi sur une de ses carpettes ?

— Eh bien, nous nierons obstinément.

Pendant ce conciliabule, Tom, fatigué et rassuré tout ensemble, avait cessé sa course folle à travers la pièce. Il avait flairé une descente de lit et tournait en rond au-dessus, la tête dans la direction de la queue pour se mettre à dormir.

— Oui ! va ! couche-toi, mon ami ! fit la petite Fréminet, tendrement.

Fréminet ne chercha pas à protester. Il se contenta de murmurer :

— Et il faudra que je me lève demain matin à cinq heures... pour cette maudite bête !

Le lendemain, au bout d'une heure de promenade avec Tom, Fréminet s'en retournait vers le château, quand, au coin d'un taillis, il se trouva nez à nez avec le général.

— Déjà levé ? Bravo ! habitude de régiment !... J'aime ça !

Puis, avisant Tom :

— Il me semble qu'il a braillé encore un peu hier au soir, hein ?

Tom, remuant la queue, s'approchait avec politesse du général. Celui-ci, en le caressant :

— Modèle superbe !... Nous verrons tout à l'heure comment ça chasse...

Sitôt après le déjeuner, on partit.

Il faisait un temps d'ouverture idéal.

Pas de vent, un soleil discret. Une fois sortis du parc, les chasseurs se mirent en ligne, un rabatteur entre chaque fusil, les gardes aux deux ailes. Comme seul "chasseur à chien," Fréminet avait été placé au centre, à côté du général.

— En avant ! cria celui-ci de sa voix de commandement.

Et la longue ligne s'ébranla.

Les premiers coups de fusil, assez lointains, n'émurent pas Tom. Il se contenta de regarder, de dresser les oreilles et reprit tranquillement sa quête devant Fréminet. Mais, peu d'instants après, comme on entrait dans une vigne, une formidable compagnie de perdreaux se leva brusquement, à dix mètres... Brrrou !...

Le général et Fréminet lâchèrent chacun leurs deux coups. Un perdreau tomba sous le plomb du général : rien ne tomba sous celui de Fréminet. Quant à Tom, devant cette quantité inusitée de volatiles, il resta d'abord stupéfait, cloué sur place ; puis, tout d'un coup, excité, affolé, perdant le sentiment de l'obéissance, des convenances même, il se mit à courir à travers la vigne. A ce bruit, une, deux, trois compagnies de perdreaux s'envolèrent ; deux lièvres filèrent par

les côtés... Tout le gibier avait vidé l'enceinte.

— Tom !... Tom !... ici !... Veux-tu bien !... hurlait désespérément Fréminet.

Le général poussa un "sacrebleu !" significatif. Quant à l'autre voisin de Fréminet, un grand sec à moustaches, il grogna entre ses dents, mais assez haut pour être entendu :

— Quand on a une bête pareille, on la laisse au chenil !

Au chenil ! il n'eût pas demandé mieux, le pauvre Fréminet ! Il se contenta de s'excuser de son mieux :

— Je ne sais pas ce qu'il a aujourd'hui... c'est la première fois qu'il me fait ça.

Dès que Tom fut revenu auprès de lui, il lui donna d'abord une forte raclée, puis le mit à la laisse et le confia à son porte-carnier pendant la durée de la chasse. Celle-ci fut très fructueuse pour tout le monde, excepté pour Fréminet. Quant à Tom, il avait, à la fin de la journée, presque détaché du tronc le bras du malheureux porte-carnier. Le soir, en rentrant au château, la bête était morte de fatigue et se laissa mettre au chenil sans protester.

— Eh bien, comment cela s'est-il passé ? demanda Mme Fréminet à son mari, une fois qu'ils furent seuls dans leur chambre pour s'habiller avant le dîner.

Il lui raconta l'attitude déplorable de Tom, l'obligation où il s'était trouvé, lui, Fréminet, de l'attacher pendant toute la journée.

— Vois-tu, j'ai été grotesque... grotesque... et par ta faute ! T'entêter à vouloir l'emmener quand même !

— J'avais cru...

— Tu avais cru !... Tu avais cru !... Enfin ! Habillons-nous... nous n'avons que le temps !

Comme la veille, ils arrivèrent les derniers au salon. Le dîner fut bruyant. Les péripéties diverses de la journée alimentèrent la conversation. On eut la délicatesse de ne pas faire allusion aux escapades de Tom ; mais il était définitivement jugé.

On se sépara de bonne heure.

— A demain! dit le général aux petits Fréminet. Du reste, nous serons tous là au moment de votre départ.

Et il ajouta en riant:

— Quant à votre bête, elle en a sa "claque.." Pas de danger qu'elle nous fasse de la musique ce soir...

M. et Mme Fréminet ne dormaient pas depuis un quart d'heure, quand le fatal hurlement s'éleva dans la nuit, plus long, plus plaintif que la veille.

— Encore lui!

— Ça vient du chenil, cette fois!

— Il va venir ici comme hier!

— Pense pas. Trop fatigué pour franchir le mur.

— Il va réveiller tout le monde!

— Nous ne pouvons pas le laisser brailler comme ça!...

— Que faire?

— Va le chercher et amène-le!...

— Que j'aille?...

— Oui!...

Les hurlements se multipliaient, désolés, fendant l'âme, irritant les nerfs.

— Mais va! va donc!... sinon, nous sommes perdus.

— La canaille, murmurait Fréminet, tout en enfilant son pantalon... La canaille!

Il ouvrit avec précaution la fenêtre, sauta à terre, disparut dans la nuit. Soudain, les aboiements de Tom changèrent de nature: de lamentables, ils devinrent joyeux. Il fallait toujours

qu'il manifestât, le misérable, de façon ou d'autre!... Puis, un long silence, et enfin le mari parut dans l'encadrement de la fenêtre—avec Tom... les pattes en l'air, dans ses bras, comme un bébé.

— Il est si éreinté qu'il ne peut faire un pas... j'ai dû le porter.

— Pauvre chéri! murmura Mme Fréminet.

Le lendemain matin tout le monde assistait au départ des Parisiens. Comme à l'arrivée, on était groupé sur le perron.

La voiture tournait, venait se placer devant le perron.

— L'omnibus? dit le général; j'avais commandé le landau!

La voix sèche de la générale s'éleva:

— J'ai fait changer les ordres... Des provisions à rapporter de Beaugency.

Le général ne répliqua pas.

Les Fréminet montèrent en voiture. Péniblement, laborieusement, s'aidant du marchepied sur lequel ses pattes glissaient, Tom y grimpa à son tour.

— Eh bien, dit le général, elle s'y est faite au chenil, votre bête! Je vous le disais bien!...

Puis, tout bas, à Fréminet, en lui donnant l'ultime poignée de main:

— Voyez-vous, mon cher, les chiens, c'est comme les femmes: il ne faut jamais leur céder!



THE USUAL THING

"HE has more money than he knows what to do with."
 "Oh, well, he'll soon find out what he doesn't know."



HARD ON THE CHAUFFEUR

JASPAR—I consider a horse and carriage much safer than an automobile.

JUMPUPPE—Of course. The horse and carriage have at least the benefit of the intelligence of the horse in guiding it.

TO IRIS

DO you remember long ago
 When you were a Sacred Cat,
 And the warm stone bench where with gods a-row
 In the pillared hall you sat?
 And the basin where the lotos lay
 (No leaf stirred in the sun)
 And you slept content from day to day
 Nor knew when the day was done?

And there were garlanded sunburnt girls
 Who minced you delicate meat;
 And incense arose in languorous curls
 Somewhere in the shimmering heat.
 And often they tossed you a golden ball
 To tempt you to take your sport;
 But mostly you slept in the pillared hall
 Where the sun slanted in from the court.

Sacred to Pasht you slept in the sun
 While the brown girls bent to see;
 Or you stretched your lithe limbs one by one
 And yawned with majesty.
 When they clipped your unworn claws in the dream
 You scarce deigned break for that;
 In your indolent eyes lurked the topaz gleam
 Of another kind of cat.

Yes, these were the eyes and the sleepy grace
 And the sleek, disdainful mien,
 And the far-off glint of the tiger race,
 And the nearby hint of the queen.
 Sacred to Pasht in the sun you slept
 In weary majesty . . .
 Do you remember when once you leapt
 At night from the jungle-tree?

ALGERNON TASSIN.



AN EXPERT

“WHY, yes, he has a genius for philanthropy.”
 “A genius for philanthropy?”
 “Yes; he can make a little money go a great way and talk a great deal.”

A RESCUE BY PETER

By Mary Moore

“THIS number,” said the Patriarch, laying down his magazine, “contains a most interesting account of radium.”

“Who is he?” inquired Aunt Jane, looking up from her work with interest. “I don’t think I ever heard of him.”

The Patriarch glanced helplessly over at the hammock, where a pair of heels at one end, and a pair of elevated elbows and a haze of blue smoke at the other, indicated the presence of Peter the Ally.

“She means, what are Pericles,” said this worthy in response to the Patriarch’s signal of distress.

“Why, Peter,” cried Aunt Jane indignantly, “I don’t at all! Pericles was a man, of course. I suppose I know what questions I want to ask.”

“Undoubtedly,” said Peter gravely, “and thereby prove your superiority over us in our uncertainty as to fitting answers.”

“Radium,” said the Patriarch, recovering himself, “is a very uncertain quantity, and hardly worth your while bothering about, I should think.”

(Am I not making the Patriarch a subtle strategist?)

“Oh, well,” said Aunt Jane placidly, “if he isn’t respectable, of course, I sha’n’t inquire any further.”

And as the subject was thus disposed of, the banging of the screen door announced the arrival of Daphne, who came sauntering along in search of some entertainment that would divert her mind from the fact that luncheon was still a quarter of an hour distant. Making her way leisurely to a shady corner, her eye was at-

tracted by a vase of flowers standing on the small wicker table at Aunt Jane’s elbow.

“Now, aren’t those stunning!” she exclaimed, sniffing them critically. “A tribute to me, I suppose, from some of the hangers-on?”

“Mr. Ambler sent them to me,” said her aunt, with a little embarrassed cough.

Daphne withdrew her nose from their vicinity with the abruptness of one who has been located by a hornet.

“Observe,” said Peter, peering at her over the edge of the hammock, “the wonders of hypnotic suggestion. By the mere mention of a name, a vaseful of perfumed roses is become as the outskirts of a glue factory in Daphne’s nostrils.”

“Pish, tush, and then again pshaw,” said that young lady from the vine-wreathed railing where she had retreated. “This thing of propitiating the relatives while rushing the girl is a device that was transparent in the Stone Age, and is fittingly employed by such persons as Ambler.”

“Now, Daphne, you really can’t speak of him as a person. He goes to the Episcopal church and comes of a large family of doctors, and there’s not a dentist among them,” said Aunt Jane, comparing him mentally with the obnoxious radium.

“He’s an abandoned old Jabberwocky,” returned her niece vehemently, “besides which he is suffering from a fatty degeneration of the intellect.”

“You are deluded by his calm,” said the Patriarch. “Personally I am quite confident that some day he will

revolt, and there will be an outburst similar to the one that distinguished the career of a certain Siberian monk of doubtful antecedents."

"He who had that extraordinary affair with the mother superior?" queried Peter.

"The same."

"Well, I feel very much encouraged to hear you say that," said Daphne. "Some day he may become reckless enough even to

"Plan a little burglary
Or forge a little cheque."

Aunt Jane looked at her niece and dropped her work.

"Well, Daphne," she said coldly, "I think you must mean that as a joke."

Daphne beamed at her delightedly.

"O Relative," she said, "O revered Relative, there are many reasons why I cherish you exceedingly, but most of all because of your extraordinary sense of humor."

"In that regard she might be cited as rivaling Amber," added Peter, "for I note that the most poignantly obvious things are as Maeterlinck to him."

"How true that is, O peerless Peter," rejoined Daphne eagerly. "He's just like a deaf cat—you have to jump up and down and wave your arms in front of him in order to attract his attention to jokes at all."

"However," said the Patriarch, pushing his glasses up on his forehead, "that, though a reason, is not a sufficiently good one for Daphne's reviling him so constantly when he has shown her so many kindnesses. She seems imbued with the idea that all bachelors past forty are unfitted for any society save that of spoonvittlers. Though I must own," he added, "that his association with her seems foolish."

"Well, the extremely banal coincidence of his being both old and a fool is no excuse for his exaggerating the proverb in that way," replied his daughter tartly.

Peter, having knocked the ashes from his pipe, immediately filled and lit it again.

"I can't imagine, though," he said, withdrawing his fingers from the hot bowl apparently as unscathed as any of the three Biblical gentlemen of furnace fame, "I can't imagine why you should be so virulent in your attacks on this worthy man, Daphne!"

"If you think I lack justification," retorted that lady, with spirit, "I will immediately undeceive you. To begin with, it is preposterous that I should be expected to entertain the slightest regard for anyone whose name is such a perfect definition of his mental processes, his gait and his love-making. Added to that, he flaps his feet when he walks and he has an anxious nose which I am convinced indicates the sort of disposition that insists on showing the children how to operate the fireworks."

Daphne swallowed hard, with a little accompanying duck of the head, took a long breath and paused eloquently with her mouth open.

"My suspense and anxiety are such as to draw me to a sitting posture," said Peter, bringing his heels down by the terrier's head with a thump that made him jump with surprise. "Tell me, O rigorous one, are there any more freckles on the fair complexion of his name?"

"The worst of all—he eats apples."

"Surely—" began the Patriarch in some surprise.

"And chomps," continued his daughter inexorably.

Peter bowed his head.

"Enough," he said wanly, raising an arresting hand. "A combined course of Dr. Runyon and Madam Bale couldn't eradicate that blemish."

"My child," said the Patriarch, with conviction, "your proper place is in the halls of Congress."

"Although very young, I am gifted with rare powers," said his child, with simple modesty. "And, what is more to the point, I am of an extremely philanthropic temperament; therefore I purpose to free you all, and incidentally myself, from this infliction, who, now I come to think of it, must have been raised in Egypt, so nearly does he

resemble any or all of the seven plagues."

"Oh, I'm sure that's not so," said Aunt Jane, shaking her head decidedly. "He was raised in Iowa, and he can't bear Jews."

Peter looked at her in surprised admiration.

"Do you know," he said, turning to the Patriarch, "I think Aunt Jane would make a successful writer of detective stories, she has such a talent for the unexpected twist. However, to continue this topic, I should like the magnet which draws both the household and the foreign particles to explain why she considers that we need to be freed from this yoke." And Peter, whose susceptibility to this same magnetic influence was notorious, brought himself to his feet.

"Well, I have never observed that you were bowed down beneath it," said Daphne, with stabbing sarcasm. "You make good your escape whenever he approaches, but he pursues the poor Patriarch with childish tales of his obscure and unworthy financial deals, and poor Aunt Jane excites the liveliest pity in her plight, for he is evidently impressed with the great advantage of having her for a confederate. I am constantly running across them in some spot hopelessly immune from interruption, where he evidently holds her in loathsome bondage while he pours out his hopes and fears concerning me. Dear one," turning to her aunt, "why do you allow him to babble on? Why not choke him neatly at the start?"

"There's a certain Machiavellian subtleness about our Daphne's methods that compels admiration," observed Peter, to which the Patriarch assented, and Aunt Jane opined that a course of solid reading would be more beneficial than so much empty talk as a morning's occupation.

Whereupon the butler appeared in the doorway and murmured obscurely, and Peter, having assumed that there would not be huckleberries in any shape, form or pie, consented to grace the board. The leafy piazza was left to the occupancy of the terrier, estab-

lished for a nap in the Patriarch's chair, and a bluejay pondering over what he had heard as he balanced himself on the hammock swaying in *diminuendo* from Peter's departure.

The mission clock in the hall chimed half-past four, and Peter, in white flannels, strolled out on the piazza with a "just-something-light"-looking book in his hand. He paused on the edge of the steps long enough to reassure himself of the presence of his pipe before he vanished across the lawn.

Anyone at the back of the house might, at this juncture, have heard Daphne from an upper window beseeching Mandy to "come and button her up," and a few minutes later, Mandy having apparently complied, she made her appearance on the piazza with much clicking and froufrou.

Daphne was blessed with what Peter was wont to call "moiré" brown hair, and she was just the one to know that a certain glowing shade of mauve chiffon combined with écru lace (how would you ever guess that it was a woman writing this story?) was the thing to set it off.

"This gown is entirely too good for afternoon wear," she thought to herself, "but even if you are forced to a disagreeable duty there is no use in accentuating the anguish by looking the part."

She was at the moment surveying the hammock with an eye for effective attitudes, for Daphne had mastered that art—how difficult, you, my sisters, know—of reclining gracefully on a divan, even a broad one; and so it must follow, as the strike the union, that she could look well in a hammock. She finally decided that it would crush her gown, and that the veranda was a poor place anyway, because of the windows opening on to it.

She had decided on that afternoon for the final extermination of Mr. Ambler, and, although she had made no secret of her intention that morning, still she wanted no witnesses, more especially not Peter.

After a few minutes' meditation she

went into the house and reappeared shortly with a flat wicker basket and a pair of shears.

"Aunt Jane would be revolted at the sight of me cutting flowers with her scissors," she mused, "but it's very picturesque to gather white roses in a lavender gown, and a man would never know that this is neither the costume nor the time of day for doing gardening. Yet on second thoughts, and in consideration of Aunt Jane's feelings and the frock, I will just empty a couple of vases in this basket, which will produce the same happy effect, and I'll just carry the scissors along to lend *vraisemblance*."

So, having completed the preliminaries she gathered up her fluffy skirts and made her way down through the trees.

It was an old place and a quaint one, and the choice of effective backgrounds was varied. Her final selection, however, was admirable. There was a gnarled old hedge, such as you don't see above Mason and Dixon's (Northern readers may gnash their teeth impotently; you can't talk back at an author), which half inclosed a green terrace, around the other two sides of which ran a stone balustrade. Three broad steps led down from the terrace into a prim garden. There was also the crowning perfection of a glint of shaded water below on one side, and Peter, in the shelter of a mock orange in exuberant blossom, thought the landscape as satisfactory as one could wish—and Peter was called *difficile*.

This, however, was after he had raised his eyes and beheld Daphne approaching. While he wondered somewhat at the roses, seeing that she was coming to the garden, and not from it, still the effect, he owned, was admirable.

"Now," thought Daphne, surveying the scene, "if he doesn't enjoy being annihilated here, he's a senseless clod," whereupon she deposited the roses on the sun-dial, and began picking them over.

To this Watteau landscape, after a few minutes, came Ambler, hurrying

nervously along, and made his timidly effusive greetings.

"The sun is shining so merrily that if there were any billows near I'm sure he'd make them smooth, aren't you?" said Daphne, looking up at him brightly. Then, seeing the polite blankness of his expression, she went on: "I thought you wouldn't mind if I used this time to arrange the flowers for the house. I try to relieve Aunt Jane of such little duties as much as I can." This was deprecating modesty.

"I think it is a beautiful trait in a woman to busy herself with the simple duties of the home," replied Mr. Ambler seriously. "Nothing so appeals to a lonely bachelor like myself. In fact, I can imagine no greater blessing than being a member of the household so admirably cared for by your aunt."

Daphne wore an expression of sweet sympathy.

"Pig!" she thought to herself. "He only wants to marry me in order to share the benefits of Aunt Jane's housekeeping."

"Yes," she said aloud, "it was a sad day for Uncle David when he died, and I doubt very much whether he bettered his condition."

Mr. Ambler looked a trifle uncertain at this, but decided to pass it over and return to the original subject.

"Yes," he continued, "it's a dreary life, living around in hotels and boarding-houses all the time."

Daphne looked at him archly. "Ah, but it has its advantages. A gay bachelor doesn't like to have anyone keeping tab on him."

He looked at her quickly. "But he doesn't mind if it's a woman who has had a very considerable experience with men," he said eagerly.

"Why, the insidious old flatterer!" said Daphne to herself.

Mr. Ambler's kindly, careworn face took on a sentimental expression.

"You don't know, Miss Daphne, how the idea of a home, a refuge from life's storms, appeals to a lonely man like myself."

Here Daphne, alarmed by the cyclonic gustiness of his sigh, glanced

fearfully around in search of a sheltering cellar.

"Oh, don't put it that way," she begged. "It sounds so eleemosynary. Anyway, I'd be very careful about doing any high vaulting from the frying-pan, because you don't want to be forced to rush out into life for refuge from the storms at home; and any home is liable to be stricken with a change of cooks, or a balky furnace."

Mr. Ambler replied to this flippancy with a jerky smile, and kicked nervously at an itinerant beetle that was hurrying along in a Cook's tourist kind of way.

"Miss Daphne," he said, "this subject affects me more than you suppose; for some time I have been seeking the interview which you granted this afternoon, in order that I might make a request which very nearly concerns my happiness. In fact, so much do I desire a favorable answer that I am willing to humble myself even into the dust——"

"Oh, don't!" broke in Daphne impatiently. "I have always understood that to be the undisputed prerogative of hens, and they are actuated by motives of hygiene, not sentiment. Besides, I think I know what you intend to say, and I believe it is kinder to tell you that it is useless for you to continue."

There was such real pain in the man's eyes that the girl, in spite of her impatience, felt touched with compunction, and looking away through the trees she added: "I am more than sorry that this happened, and I will always be your sincere friend."

"Ah," he cried, starting eagerly, "that's just what I hoped; I came this afternoon to ask if you wouldn't help me. I have thought that you had great influence over her and if you would speak in my behalf, perhaps she would consider me more favorably."

Daphne paused in her occupation of snipping stems. She turned slowly and looked at him and patted her ears tentatively, her thoughts wandering in a haze of incredulity.

"She," she murmured disconnectedly. "She?"

"Yes," he continued, not noticing her astonishment. "You are quite right. She is largely influenced by your opinions, and while, of course, your kindness in signifying your approbation has not escaped me—the many times you have encouraged me by joining us as we sat talking—still, so intense is my feeling that I came this afternoon to ask you to do still more and speak to your aunt in my behalf."

Daphne passed her hand wearily up through her pompadour to readjust her mental chaos.

"Yes, I see," she replied, murmuring distractedly to herself all the while. "Peter's sure to find out—he's sure, sure!"

Then, waking to the realization that something was expected of her, she turned suddenly and seized Mr. Ambler's hand with fervor. In a voice trembling with emotion she said: "Indeed, Mr. Ambler, I am delighted that you have seen how greatly I have been in sympathy with your suit. I have, as you so readily recognized, done all in my power to help you, and I assure you that I shall continue to do all that I can. As for speaking to her, however, I cannot help thinking that that would come appropriately from you"—this with a wild smile—"and I will confide to you that along toward five o'clock she is in her softest mood. If you should go to her now—immediately—right away—the results would be most beneficial, as the patent medicines say."

She was pushing him feverishly toward the house by this time, and Mr. Ambler looked quite surprised. He had not thought that his enthusiasm would be so infectious, but exclaiming his thanks, which she cut short, he started away hurriedly.

Daphne stood looking after him awhile, then sank down on the semi-circular stone seat with her face in her hands.

"Oh," she gasped, drawing a long breath, "oh, oh!"

"I might remark," said a cool voice

near her, "that this business of propitiating the relatives while rushing the girl is a device that was transparent in the Stone Age. Did Ambler employ it?"

Daphne looked up at Peter, who was supporting himself against the balustrade.

"I knew it!" she said, with calm despair. "Where were you, Peter?"

"Right under that bamboo tree," waving his hand toward the scrubby mock orange.

"But you just came, didn't you?" hopefully.

"Been there all the afternoon."

"And you deliberately listened to the whole conversation?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," with polite haste, "and I assure you that I was hardly bored at all. In fact, I became quite interested toward the last."

"Peter," cried Daphne, enraged, "I should like to run you through a mangle, I should like to make a war hero of you, so that you might be properly humiliated."

"That seems a hybrid kind of ambition," remarked Peter. "May I inquire if you are related to any of the Borgias of Italy?"

But Daphne gave no heed. She was walking distractedly round the terrace, muttering, "Oh, how dreadful this is!" and pausing only once to throw the roses, basket and all, over the balustrade into the garden below.

Peter knocked the ashes out on the stone and put his pipe away, then, shoving his hands in his pockets, he gazed at her quizzically.

"I suppose by this time he is telling Aunt Jane of your funny mistake," he remarked. "Do you think she'll laugh?"

Daphne disdained a reply. She had come to a halt at the other side of the terrace and was standing with her back to him looking across the little lake, out into the sunset, and we'll assume

that she was unconscious of its glow on her hair.

"I don't believe she will," Peter continued cheerfully. "She'll probably think that you were trying to make him commit himself in your favor. I wouldn't be surprised if that is what he'll think, too, when he hears the Patriarch discussing it with me."

Peter strolled over toward her.

"Let me see; you're twenty-five, I think?"

No answer, except a vicious clashing of the scissors.

"Oh, aren't you telling your age now?"

Daphne turned around and sat sideways on the corner post.

"Peter," she said softly, "you're a gibbering idiot, an inje-rubber idiot on a spree. Why, when you have surprised me in this *cul de sac*, don't you do something to help me out?" Then, with rising indignation: "You're as useless as a—as a—as an antimacassar."

"That doesn't sound at all a nice thing to be," said Peter despondently; then, brightening up: "It means something to rest your head on, doesn't it?"

Daphne took no notice of this remark.

"I don't know what to do," she said dejectedly. "It may be very funny to you, but I'm the frog in this sea of trouble, and people are sure to think all kinds of dreadful things of me." She turned her head and made a semi-furtive dab at her eyes. "And there doesn't seem to be anyone to stand up for me."

Peter took a step nearer—which was as far as he could go.

"It comes to me," quoth he, "that I am the one not only to stand up but knock down for you." He made a certain sinuous motion with his right arm, the scissors clattered to the ground and Peter assumed what I am forced to term an antimacassar attitude.

DYER—What would we do without woman?
ENPEC—About as we pleased.

IN THE DUSK OF THE GODDESS

By Arthur Stringer

CROWLEY still hesitated, even out in the cold twilight, with his suit-case in his hand. He gazed irresolutely into the distant snow-clad dreariness, serrated and smoke-plumed with its scattered little prairie town, and then glanced back at his stalled Pullman.

From the tainted air of the car there crept out to him the fretful wail of an infant. He turned grimly back to the snow-laden prairie, and even as he looked the lamps of the little Northern town flowered into a sudden tenuous brilliance.

Buttoning his overcoat, as though to shut in an unstable determination, he decided on spending the night in the village—Elk Crossing, the porter had called it. In the morning he could once more board the Transcontinental Limited from the squat little depot, when the auxiliary pushed through from Calgary.

Passengers less vacillating of purpose had already worn a path from the stalled train to the little station-house, so that under Crowley's feet the hard snow crunched as crisply as fresh charcoal. A few lonely stars came out in the high Northwestern heavens, pale points of silver on a cloth of violet. The twilight deepened, and seemed to grow volubly silent about him. The momentary sound of a distant hammer echoed and re-echoed through the great stillness; far down the railway track sudden voices called and died away. The keen Canadian cold began to creep into Crowley's very bones. Vaguely, sub-consciously, he felt appeasingly thankful that in three weeks he should be

facing only the humid coolness of a Japanese midwinter. If it was still wet and chilly at Tokio, though, he would run down to Kiusiu until April. Then a sudden, indeterminate terror of the land of snow and desolation which held him such an unwilling prisoner crept through his mind. He was sick and tired of it all, of its steel-like, relentless air, of its twilight lonelineses, of its huddled cities that had become hateful to him. He felt old and worn-out, the child, he told himself, of his wearied, restless, disillusioned East.

He was glad to escape from the gathering night, a minute later, into the thick, tobacco-laden, companionable warmth of Elk Crossing's one and only hotel. Here, however, not even a cot could be secured for the night. The alerter day-coach passengers had already poured into the little wooden road-house, and Crowley had to face the disheartening novelty of patrolling the village in quest of a bed. The school-teacher, he was told, often took in decent folk, at a pinch. He lived in the Jenkins shack, on the outskirts of the town, and was "smarter 'n blue lightnin'!"

Crowley's spirits were at their lowest ebb when finally he caught sight of a ruddy shaft of light streaming from what he felt must be the Jenkins shack. A cheering pennon of smoke rose valiantly from the little chimney. Crowley, more hopeful, quickened his steps. Yet as he knocked loudly on the rough outer door he felt, as he glanced fretfully over his shoulder, that he was looking for a refuge on the very fringes of

Emptiness, on the edge of a twilight Nowhere.

Even before Crowley could open the second inner door, battened with rags and woolen cloths, he caught the pungently pleasant smell of frying bacon. He heard a stove-door slam, the sound of quick steps, and the next minute a flood of lamplight was all but blinding his eyes.

"Come in, come in!" a cheery baritone voice was crying. As he stepped inside he heard the two doors quickly slammed shut behind him, and knew that a chair had been pushed hospitably out in front of the stove, one side of which, he noticed, was red-hot. Then the other man laughed, cheerfully, but without apparent reason, and said he guessed it was a sharp night outside.

"It is indeed cold, extremely cold," answered Crowley inertly, wondering just how to begin. It was a new and humiliating sensation, this begging for a night's lodging.

"I'm crowded out from the hotel here, unfortunately," he began deficiently. Then he realized what a possible dismissal, on such a night and in such a place, might mean to him; and he dropped back into a conciliatory plaintiveness of tone that sounded strange even to his own ears.

"Can I possibly secure a bed, and a supper, with you tonight?" And, quite contrary to his intention, he found himself warmly shaking hands with his would-be host.

"Why, of course; if you don't mind a shake-down, with a couple of buffalo robes!" the genial young baritone voice cried back at him.

"I shall, of course, pay you for your trouble." By this time Crowley's eyes had grown accustomed to the light, and he looked at the other man with a natural curiosity which deepened, as he gazed, to a discreet studiousness.

"Oh, pshaw! I'm glad enough to have you! I 'bach' it here alone, through the winter. My name's Allin—John Allin."

When Crowley, holding aloof from giving his name, explained that his

home was in New York, Allin paused in the act of helping him off with his fur-lined overcoat, and looked at him enviously, an even keener interest in his quick eyes.

"New York! I'd give an arm to get into that city—I mean to get a grip there, and work and live there!"

Crowley, drawing nearer the stove and warming his thin white hands at the grateful heat, felt that in this outlandish meeting two strangely diverse circles of experience and feeling had touched. As Allin turned to cut and fling half a dozen fresh slices of bacon into his sizzling frying-pan, the older man had a still better chance to study his anomalous new companion. His deliberate eye took note of the young teacher's square, compact head, of the short, crisply curling black hair that covered it, of the well-blocked-out jaw, the stalwart width of the shoulder that made the thick-set figure seem almost short, the blanched ruddiness of the face, with its alert, open, audacious and yet almost girlish-looking brown eyes, and the mobile, unpedagogic, joy-loving mouth which even a week's growth of beard could not altogether hide.

"I guess we'll have to celebrate to-night!" said Allin, with his inconsequential laugh, as he brought forth a quart can of tomatoes and opened it with his huge jack-knife. On that half of his table which was covered with a marble-veined oilcloth he placed a second plate and cup, and then fell to mashing the potatoes with a gingerale bottle.

"Can't I help you at all?" asked Crowley hesitatingly.

The uncouth young fellow looked up at the pallid-handed, carefully groomed stranger, checked a deprecating smile, critically surveyed the table and remarked that he kept a tin box of loaf-sugar on his middle bookshelf for special occasions.

Crowley crossed the room to the humble little bookshelves. Reaching over a paper-strewn packing-case which obviously served as a writing-desk, he drew back the faded calico cur-

tain which seemed, he thought, so jealously to guard this lonely wilderness-student's library. With languid interest his eye ran down the meager line of books, a row of college texts, Plutarch's "Lives," Spenser's "Faerie Queene," a tattered Shakespeare, Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," Baldwin's "Handbook of Psychology," a dog-eared Keats—

And there Crowley's knowledge of the shelf and its printed contents suddenly ceased. For up through his limbs, and up through the arm that still held back the calico curtain, tingled an involuntary electric sense of shock. Though he neither moved nor spoke, he could feel his pulse pause crazily, fall away and then bound forward with the absolute bewilderment of it all.

For there before him, looking out at him from the centre of the shelf, between this stranger's dog-eared Keats and a "Progress and Poverty," stood a photograph of his own wife. The full consciousness of it all, as he continued to gaze in blank astonishment at the gaudy bronze frame and at the little cluster of faded prairie lilies tied with a bit of colorless ribbon to its brazen base, filtered only slowly through him, wave by cumulative wave.

It was the photograph taken during the first years of their marriage, the one he had always liked best, the picture wherein his wife still wore that spiritualizing air of sorrow which came to her with the death of her only child, the still girlish face bowed down with its unuttered melancholy, the passionate, young, maternal lips still full of their mournful softness. Crowley's mind flashed back over the three intervening years, those idly withering, denuding, implacably alienating years when life and all it held seemed to have fallen into a sour stagnation, from which even she herself had emerged so insufficient, so flaccid, so bitterly unsatisfying. As he looked still again at the picture, momentarily detached from all time and locality, his wife's presence seemed to drift about him, to fill the strange place like an aroma, as

poignantly vivid as though he had just heard the rustling of her skirts across the room. Then he as suddenly remembered the outlandishness of it all, the grim and over-crude setting wherein was being enacted this miserable melodrama of accident, and his old-time devastating love of mockery—the very trick of the thing she herself had taught him!—came back to him, and as he stood there clutching the calico curtain he laughed aloud.

Allin looked up from behind the stove, where a granite-iron coffee-pot had just boiled over and was filling the little house with its relievingly tangible odor.

"Laughing at my backwoods library?" he demanded genially, as he placed a chair at the table for his guest.

There was a second or two of silence. "No; I was only laughing at the fact that you keep your loaf-sugar in a tobacco-tin!" And Crowley lifted the tin from its place on the shelf and turned where he stood. By this time the mere wonder as to how his wife's picture came to such a place had given way to a corroding consciousness of the ironic theatricality of it all. She, the lady of untold disdains, gracing a prairie hermit's humble boards! She, the vapid parasite, the languid-souled vampire who had sucked the last drop of determined purpose out of his own life, apparently enshrined among the books of an unknowing backwoods school-teacher! And he drew the curtain with a snap of resentful finality, looking out with a new, almost a pitying interest on the swart, shabby-coated figure which stood, unconsciously enough, at the other side of the table, waiting with Old World ceremony until his guest should be seated, yet looking back at him from under rather perplexed brows.

"The only library in Elk Crossing!" laughed Allin, with mock pride, waving one hand toward his bookshelves. The two men seated themselves.

"You are the teacher here in the village, I believe?" began Crowley, uncomfortably hot at the feeling that he was jockeying for his position.

"Yes, my second winter at the Crossing." A generous forkful of potatoes and bacon punctuated his sentence. "I'm trying to pound the rudiments into thirty young pagans out here and read political economy at the same time."

"You say out here—then the Northwest isn't your home?"

"It always *has* been. I teach here in the winter and get four hundred and the shack for it. In the summer I go out with a threshing-machine gang and make another three hundred that way."

"And——?"

"You see, I've got another year to put in at Toronto University, then my three years in law. Each year I go to Toronto I take a carload of horses East for a Brandon shipper and get my transportation and twenty-five dollars for it. Two hundred and thirty puts me through my year at college."

Crowley, who was thinking of his old Harvard days, where two hundred often enough went in a night, looked hard at the man across the table. "Of course," added the other, "that's by sailing pretty close to the wind!"

"And after the three years in law?"

The younger man shrugged his massive shoulders. It seemed like a courageous movement to heave away from him the burden of his interrogator's tacit cynicism.

"Then I'll have to put in two years of junior partner work, under salary, either in Calgary or Edmonton."

"And after that?"

The eyes of the two men met across the table. A sudden indomitable, pugnacious squareness of jaw showed itself in the face of the young school-teacher. Only the quiet fire in his alert, audacious, unflinching young eyes saved the look from being animal-like.

"Then," he said slowly, "I intend to go East—to New York, the city you come from."

"And there?"

"There I shall study for the American Bar, and, I hope, make my home."

"But is that the only reason why you choose New York?"

"No," said the other, quietly enough,

as he poured two cupfuls of steaming coffee; "there is another reason."

"Ah!" said Crowley as quietly, in turn, and waited for the other to go on. But the younger man remained silent. Crowley, when next he spoke, felt that he had in some way evaded a crisis.

"But do you mean to tell me that you have calmly and deliberately mapped out your life so many years ahead—that you decide on a certain thing and say five years from today you will do it?"

"Why, that's what makes life worth living!" cried the school-teacher, feeling, as the other had felt before him, the wordless shock of that strangely diverse sphere which accident had projected upon his own. Crowley allowed himself to wonder if, after all, wealth did not bring with it its inalienable drawbacks; if, after all, lives such as his own were as free and untrammelled as they seemed; if, in the end, something that was good and wholesome and natural in life had not continuously eluded him! His mind flashed forward to his intended two years in the Orient. He guessed, roughly, what it would cost him. Then he tried to imagine, in his vague and ineffectual way, what each of his countless wanderings about the world had cost. The money side of such matters had always seemed casual, incidental to him. Yet here was a man enduring privation, loneliness, months and years of sordid toil for what had come to *him* with the very air he breathed and the milk he drank; and enduring it joyously, glorying in it, apparently, looking on it as the thing that made life most worth living!

He paused in his meal and looked more intently about the bare little building. Through the small window on his right he could see the cold Northern stars, the long, lonely, undulating plainlands muffled in snow. The isolation, the stillness of it all, seemed suddenly unendurable to him. He flung down his knife and fork.

"I should think you would go mad with it!" he cried, with what sounded

even to his own ears like feminine shrillness. Then the sudden startled gaze of his uncomprehending host reined him in, and he went on impetuously but more quietly: "I mean, what do you do out here for friends, for amusement, for company?"

"Twenty half-breed families, three Galician, half a dozen Scotch-Canadian, coyotes, and the station hands!"

"But there are—there must be times when you want more than this, when you want to catch the color of life, the softer side, the humanizing and—and refining part of it—women, art, music, romance—all—all that sort of thing?"

The younger man's unseeing, half-rapt eyes were fixed on his little bookshelves, hidden by the faded calico curtain.

"I have them all there," he said, with far-away dreaminess. "I have them all there, on my bookshelf," he repeated contentedly.

Once again that ominous electric thrill of tingling shock crept up through Crowley's startled body. Yet he was grateful for that illuminating confession which, in some subliminal way, his own mind had mysteriously forestalled. For with it came his determination to know the full meaning of this secret cherishing of an alien and misunderstood—almost laughably misunderstood, it seemed to Crowley—goddess. That profounder mystery, it seemed to him, far outweighed the mere superficial wonder as to what uncouth tides of chance and accident had washed his wife's portrait up on such remote yet hospitable shores.

When he had drunk his coffee in meditative silence, he went to his suitcase, and taking out his little chased silver brandy flask, and two cigars sealed in glass tubes, resumed his place at the table. Allin had already turned in his chair, and on the stove-hearth was knocking the ashes from a dark-stained corn-cob pipe.

"Won't you try this, tonight?" said Crowley, with forced friendliness of tone, handing him one of his Havanas. Allin slipped the cigar from its tube,

smelt it with boyish delight, looked at it again, and elatedly explained that it was not often he got hold of a cigar in Elk Crossing, even a bad one. The last sealed cigars he had smoked, he went on, with a pride he made no effort to conceal, were some that had been given to him by a wealthy Southerner, who had been taking the baths at Banff.

"At Banff?" said Crowley quickly. A bridge of comprehension seemed to span, of a sudden, the abyss of mystery which had so lately opened at his feet. *She* had gone to Banff after her nervous breakdown. She had spent a summer there, and had come back mysteriously altered, more silent, more than ever cut off from him, more than ever ready, with her devastating artillery of satire, to rail at his indecisions of spirit, at his little human weaknesses. That period, he felt, had marked the beginning of the end, of the inevitable end, between them.

"Yes," the other man was saying, as he turned to the stove and put his feet on the hearth, "three summers ago I was an under-guide for one of the Banff hotels. I'd learned to speak French, of a certain kind, in the Quebec lumber camps, when a boy. At Banff I believe I passed as an imported Swiss guide, fresh from the Bernese Alps!" And he laughed softly over certain memories that came back to him. Crowley looked sharply across the table at him, stung into an unreasoning and indeterminate envy at that little wistful bubble of Aprilian sound, feeling suddenly old and autumnal before the youth whom, an hour before, he had been on the point of pitying. He unscrewed the top from his silver brandy flask with slowly deliberate fingers.

"I feel," he said calmly, without a betraying tremor, "I feel that before we light up we both ought to drink to the future! Will you allow me?" And he poured out into the two stone-ware coffee-cups a drink for each.

"Why, yes—thanks—then here's to the future!" The younger man

smacked his unaccustomed lips over the fiery strength of the cognac.

"Now I suppose," began Crowley ruminatively, putting down his half-emptied cup, "that in Banff, as a mountain guide, you would meet plenty of uncommonly interesting people?"

"Consumptives and nephritics mostly—to say nothing of dyspeptics and English tourists!" And again he laughed his inconsequential laugh, leaving the other, for the moment, disappointed, almost nonplussed.

"But among them all," went on the other man doggedly, "surely you found a friend or two—somebody who meant more to you, I mean, than these Galicians and half-breeds?"

The young school-teacher put down his unlighted cigar and linked his fingers together over his upthrust knee. The laughter died out of his face. A new earnestness, a sort of gathering contemplative radiance, showed from his eyes; and when next he spoke it was with all the old flippancy of tone gone from him, with the frown of the lonely ascetic on his brow.

"Yes," he said quietly, with an unconscious deepening of the voice, "there was one person I met and knew there who was more than friend to me, a woman—an angel, I often think she must be!—who came into my life that troubled year, like a star out of the darkness. She has been to me what no other man or woman has ever been to me, what few men or women, I believe, could be to anyone!"

He paused, musingly, unashamed of his boyish eloquence, glowing with an ardor that filled Crowley with an ominous and fretful uneasiness. Every tendency of the older man's life had been toward reticence; enthusiasms in others had in some way grown distasteful to him; in *her*, even, he remembered, it had too often tried his nerves.

"Ah, at last we are getting to something interesting!" was all he said. If there was a sting of cynicism in the interjection, the younger man made no outward effort to ward it off. Crowley saw, when it was too late, that the other's childheartedness was im-

pervious to enmity, that he was angelically innocent of the very armor which, for so long, had galled and burdened down his own tainted shoulders.

But still the young acolyte of the rapt eyes contemplated the glowing hearth in satisfied silence. Crowley lighted his cigar, and still waited. He even lighted a match, and held it for the other man, significantly. The movement, to him, seemed to take on a sacerdotal symbolism, as the tiny flaming torch passed from his fingers to the half-startled hand of his young host. A larger flame, he felt, had passed from the one hand to the other.

"Won't you tell me about her?" he asked, with wistful solemnity, inwardly humbled, for reasons and causes he could not fathom. He rejoiced in the fact that his liquor had not loosened the other man's tongue, as he had at first hoped it would.

"Yes, I think I could explain it to you," Allin answered, drawing his hand slowly across his forehead, and seeming, as he did so, to brush aside some last remaining doubt; "for I think you could understand it all."

He got up from his chair, and from behind the faded little calico curtain brought out the picture in the bronze frame. He placed it with careful and deliberate fingers on the table, where the lamplight fell full and strong on the pleading, unsatisfied eyes, and on the passionate young lips that seemed so eager for life.

"This is the woman," he said slowly, as he leaned forward on his arms and looked at her through the drifting smoke.

"This is the woman," echoed Crowley vacantly, as he, in turn, from the other side of the table, leaned forward to look at her. His twofold feeling of repugnance, first for the very face itself, and second for the reiterated theatricality of the whole miserable affair, seemed to shift and merge into one of pity for the man before him. Yet a moment later he heard his own lips saying involuntarily: "She is very beautiful!" Then he choked back the little shuddering gasp that seemed

escaping from his throat with the sudden cry: "But what do *you* know of women? What do you know of her, of what she is, of what she has been or might be?"

Allin shook his head from side to side, unmoved. He was still the detached priest in the silence of the temple.

"Do you know Browning's 'My Last Duchess'?" he asked, with mild and almost commiserative disdain.

"No," was the fierce retort; "I hate versifying!"

"Well, this woman is a last duchess, misunderstood, unhappy; a woman with a hungry soul, a woman eager for life and all it holds, a woman who should have been a guardian angel with a flaming sword above the gates of Eden! No, no, let me explain, and then you will be more likely to understand. You say I don't know her! That is true; that is true. I don't even know her name; whether she is married or unmarried, a mother or childless, whether today she is loved or unloved. But I know that once she told me that I was the only man who ever understood her! I know that she gave purpose and meaning to my life, that her face, as I see it here, has helped me through my darkest days, and always will help me!"

"And how long, and in what way, did you know her?" broke in the other stridently, clutching at the rough table with his thin white hands.

"Only three miserable little weeks." He laughed whimsically as he said it. "That is what I have to tell you. She came to Banff, ill, I think, when I was an under-guide at the hotel. Once each day I had to take her up the mountains, up the Corkscrew, to Tunnel Mountain, to the Cave and Basin, to Devil's Gap, to Mount Rundle, the Sun Dance Cañon. She was as far away from home and as lonely as I was. I guess she pitied me. But that was all I asked. In a life like that, shut in with snow and mountains and solitude, you can say and learn a great many things. I knew that in a week or two, when I was back

here with my Galician and half-breed children again, she would be nothing more than a vague legend to me. But she made me promise to do something with life, and I have that promise to live up to! She was so impatient with mediocrity, so passionately afraid of spiritual compromises! Only she wrote to me when she was going East. I was down at the little station-house, waiting. I knew that for the length of time it would take the engine to take in water I'd be able to talk to her again. That's how we got these prairie lilies. She slipped down the side of the track and picked them for me."

The younger man took up the picture from the table and replaced it on his shelf, between "Progress and Poverty" and his dog-eared Keats, carefully drawing the faded calico curtain.

Crowley, at the movement, felt as though some sterner hand had suddenly excluded him from a sanctuary. A flame of mad, unreasoning jealousy of the man who had crushed even this fool's-gold from the sullen quartz that had always defied his own efforts swept fiercely through him. He turned on the other, ready, with one sweep of his hand almost, to bring crashing down about this pitiable young deluded rhapsodist all his castle of dreams. He vacillated before the repugnant melodrama until the mood had burned itself away and a vague pity for what seemed the other's delusion took its place. Then a new and more terrifying thought came to him. What if, after all, the web of delusion had been spun before his own eyes—what if he were the cheated one, the one who had misunderstood and had been misled from the first!

"And what do you get out of it all?" he demanded, with veiled bitterness, taking up his cigar from where he had flung it on the table.

"Only the glory of going on," quoted the other, with a challenging touch of pride. And for the first time he looked with studious intentness into Crowley's face, and something there abashed and silenced him. He

stood awkwardly, waiting for his visitor to speak, writhing in spirit at the thought of what a fool he had been. His first blind friendliness of feeling suddenly fell away from him, a moth singed at the lamp of impulsiveness.

Crowley walked to the window and looked out at the high, desolate Northern stars and the blue-gray, undulating dimness of the endless prairielands. The green and ruby flames of the Northern Lights were quivering and flashing along the dark skyline. For reasons whose roots lay deeper than consciousness itself, Crowley, the second time that night, felt old, outworn, autumnal.

"I think I'll turn in, if you don't mind," he said impassively, walking back to the cooling hearth white with fallen ashes.

The child of yesterday looked wearily at the child of tomorrow, at

the robust, rough-shod figure, with its dominating width of shoulder, at the unshaven, square jaw and the huge red hands. He felt envious of that fanatic strength, of that grim narrowness of vision and interest which led to one blind height, yet led there unwaveringly. For a bitter moment he was tempted still to turn on the other and fling all the denuding truth in his teeth, ironically humiliating as that storming of an evacuated pride might be; to leave him crushed and prostrate, to stand once more icily above him, as he had done at the first. But even as he steeled his vacillating spirit for the scene his over-nimble fancy pictured its incompetence. The futility of it all came blighting home to him, and he finished his half-smoked cigar, now grown bitter to the taste, in silence, while Allin refilled the stove and locked up.



COUNTERPOISE

WHEN I was a child and laughed in school
 (For laughter little or nothing would do!),
 That I might not break our Draco's rule
 I thought of the saddest things I knew:

Of the homesick dark, when I tossed on my cot,
 And cried for the light and the homeward way;
 Of the singing-bird my hand forgot
 Till, starved on the floor of its cage, it lay!

God wot that was many a year ago!
 Now, often I laugh that I may not cry;
 And I think of the blithest things I know,
 And the follies dear in the days gone by.

I make me mirth where'er I can;
 I jest with the jester for brave relief,
 Nor the griefs of the world too closely scan,
 Lest I sit me down in my helpless grief!

EDITH M. THOMAS.

SUSANNAH AND THE ELDER

By H. G. Dwight

THERE was also a Younger.

He had just come down from Florence, where a white umbrella was no longer proof against the August sun, and where even the secular shades of the Uffizi had grown intolerable. But whether Viareggio was an effective substitute was a debatable question. To have sought refuge from the dim-roomed palaces above the Arno in a ragged pine wood, and a pink casino, required other justification than that of greater security against the attacks of Phoebus; while the charms of a dubious monument to Shelley hardly threw the scale against the Piazza della Signoria. But there was the Ligurian sea, as absurdly overcolored as a lithograph, that one might splash in all day long, whereas in all Tuscany there was scarcely water enough to wet your finger. And, too, there were people.

So the Younger stood in the doorway of the Casino terrace and smiled. For, while the *Stabilimento*, like all respectable *Stabilimenti*, was rigidly divided into two equal halves, with the dressing-rooms of the sheep on the right hand, and those of the goats on the left of the central café, it was noticeable that the spectators tended to scatter themselves in precisely the opposite sense. What chiefly caused the Younger to smile, however, was that at the extreme right-hand corner table he recognized the back of the Elder. This personage, upon whom time had already impressed a seal too legible, was a type; and in types the Younger conceived that he found a peculiar pleasure. Since the Elder, despite his worldly degree, was known in Florentine circles for his assiduity among the

studios—not so much in the quality of patron of the arts as in that of amateur of the society to be found therein—what could be more in character than his present post? And if the Younger happened to be better acquainted with the back which he now recognized than with its visual obverse, he found in that circumstance nothing to prevent his edging through the crowd to the extreme right-hand corner table.

"Ah, the long American painter!" cried the Elder, greeting him with the effusion whose secret is alone to the Latin race. "You have come to look for models, eh?"

He waved his hand toward the beauteous forms disporting themselves on the sands below. The Younger laughed.

"Your opportunities are limited here," he said. "You should go to an American watering-place. There young men and maidens, old men and children, dressed and undressed, sport together with a promiscuity! You would imagine yourself by the waters of Eden."

"*Così?*" The Elder looked up a moment. "But after all, a little formality, a little illusion is better."

"Illusion," cried the Younger, "in the red and white stripes so bountifully provided by the *Stabilimento*! I can conceive of no surer cure for love than to chain the unhappy victim to this corner and force him to behold his innamorata in the full horror of her dishabille. It would be a disillusionment which no passion could survive."

"On the contrary," rejoined the Elder, "you will shortly behold a vision whose like you might seek in vain beside your waters of Eden."

The Younger laughed again. "There is already a vision, is there? In red and white stripes? You must be worse off than usual, for this spectacle is positively indecent. It is more. It is revolting. There ought to be a law limiting public bathing to persons between the ages of—say—three and thirty-three, with special clauses excluding individuals of excessive or intolerable dimensions!"

The Elder laughed in turn. "That is why I am too vain to expose myself! There is an irrepressible democracy of the flesh which is fatal to the most exclusive triumphs of the tailor. But wait till you see Dulcinea?"

"Who is she this time?" inquired the Younger airily.

The Elder turned upon him a reproachful eye. "If she were respectable I would marry her tomorrow."

"Respectable! That is good—from you."

The familiarity between these two was measured by the cheerfulness of the Elder's reply.

"What will you have? Things are like that. Besides, women don't care. In fact, they are all the more pleased to have been chosen last. It proves their pretensions."

"Oh!" grinned the Younger. "And who is the last?"

"Nobody knows. Some say she is a diva from Paris; others that she is a *danseuse* from Vienna; and others—but she is here on some caprice. She is waiting for someone. I have tried to make her think it was for me. I have made eyes. I have smiled. I have sighed. I have wept. I have sent flowers. I have written poems. I have thrown myself in her path. But she does not look. She goes about like anybody. She has her—you know—with her—an old fat one."

"But how do you know that she is not somebody?" demanded the Younger.

"Wait till you see!" admonished the Elder darkly. "Does anybody *flâne* about alone and then refuse to speak? Does anybody wear diamonds in the daytime? Does anybody drag frills

from the rue de la Paix over the sands of the sea? Does anybody come to a hole like Viareggio when they might be at Venice or Trouville or Scheveningen?"

The Younger, highly entertained by this impassioned picture, was on the point of pursuing his inquiries when the Elder communicated by a sudden excitement the arrival of Dulcinea.

"Look!" he whispered.

The Younger looked. He saw a young woman, extremely young, extremely pretty, extremely self-possessed, and even extremely chic, in her exchange of red and white stripes for a bathing dress more modish, advance slowly toward the water. She was followed by an older lady, who had long since capitulated before the stoutness of middle life.

"Do you see?" cried the Elder. "Can anybody look like that and be respectable?"

"Of course," laughed the Younger. "Why in the world haven't you guessed?"

"Who, pray?" demanded the Elder passionately.

"Why, who but an American?"

"O-o-oh! I never thought of that." And in the light of a new hypothesis he began to examine Dulcinea afresh. After a prolonged scrutiny he spoke again.

"What do you make of the old one then, on your theory?"

"Why, who should she be but the girl's mother?"

"Do mothers let their daughters go like that—even in America?"

"Like what? Her mother seems to be going farther than she," the Younger contented himself with.

"Ah, yes; you haven't seen," remarked the other. "But I don't believe it," he burst out. "How do you know?"

"How do I know?" mused the Younger. "How could I help knowing—after one look. Blood is thicker than water; an electric sympathy assures me!"

"Yes, an electric sympathy—when it is that one," grinned the Elder.

"Well, then, look at their hair. Haven't all Americans the same hair?"

The Elder glanced at him. "You have, it is true. The mixture of races, I suppose! But that is not enough!"

"If you absolutely demand conviction, then, I know, because they have been pointed out to me in Florence by other Americans."

"Florence!" exclaimed the Elder. "Impossible! I would have seen them."

"My dear marquis," rejoined the Younger, "why should you have seen them? Do I have to inform you that Florence is one of the most considerable American cities of the globe? There are many people in Florence whom you do not see. As a matter of fact, I happen to know that they live there—in a *villino* outside the Porta Romana. I can even tell you that they have no contract for it—so complete in Florence is our knowledge about each other! They came more than a year ago, saying that they were to leave the next day. They have said so every day since, but the landlord is as sure of them as if he had a ten-year lease."

"Who are they, then?" persisted the Elder. "What else do your friends say about them?"

"Who are they? That is the one thing that nobody knows," replied the Younger.

"Ah, I told you they were not respectable!" proclaimed the Elder in triumph.

The Younger, although no particular friend to the ladies in question, was touched in his country's honor.

"My dear sir," he said warmly, "allow me to inform you that you entirely misconceive the case. I have not the slightest reason to suppose them other than the perfected bloom of respectability. Have you heard of our American inventions? Well, they are one of them—a mother and daughter unattached. There are thousands in Florence. Rome is full of them. Certain Swiss and German cities contain only enough other inhabitants to lodge, feed, clothe, educate and amuse them. In America you meet them on every corner. They have

always come up from some pre-existent, perhaps some inferior state of being, but without scandal; which, of course, is not to say that they are immune from the frailties of the race. But never be deceived by them again."

The Elder laughed. "Must it be always that—a mother and a daughter? Can't there be two daughters or another mother?"

"Never," replied the Younger firmly. "If there are, then it is another invention."

"But there must be a man," objected the Elder.

"No," insisted the Younger, "there isn't. There never is. You might ransack the universe and you would not find him. It's like spontaneous combustion—and just as respectable."

The objects of this characterization being now indistinguishable from other centres of disturbance in the dazzling Mediterranean, the Elder pursued his inquiry.

"If these ladies are of origin and habits so out of the ordinary, do they have names?"

"Rather! They are called Perkins, I believe. The young lady is Susannah. Her mama is—but there, too, my information fails me."

The Elder repeated these soft appellations to himself. Then he asked:

"What do they do with themselves? Why have I never met them in the world?"

"For the excellent reason that they don't go. They know no one. They see the dressmaker and a few other Americans, and *basta*."

"Ah, there must be something queer," burst out the Elder. "You haven't told me all. Otherwise how could they help not knowing everybody and going everywhere?"

The Younger gave an exaggerated sigh.

"That is precisely what I have been trying to explain to you," he said drily. "But it is true," he added; "I haven't told you all."

"Ah, I knew! What is it?" The Elder was hectic in his eagerness.

"Well," answered the Younger, look-

ing for his effect, "Susannah is one of your literary ladies. She writes a novel. Not novels, you understand, but a novel. Some ladies keep house. Other ladies embroider tea-cloths. A few occupy themselves with dogs or flowers. Susannah writes a novel. She is a portentous blue-stocking."

"Blue-stocking! On that foot! Never!" exploded the Elder. "I would give a thousand francs to know her."

The Younger regarded his companion quizzically. "Would you really?"

"Oh, you young men!" cried the Elder. "I don't know what you are made of nowadays. In my time there was more fire. I repeat it—I would give a thousand francs to know her, and it would be nothing."

"All right," smiled the Younger. "I'll take you."

"Take me? Where?" asked the mystified Elder.

"Why, to Susannah—for a thousand francs."

"To Susannah! My poor young man, little you know about it. I have been here a month, and it isn't so easy as you think."

"On the contrary," replied the Younger suavely, "it is far easier than you think. I happen to know a good deal about it, for I am personally acquainted with her. I have shaken her hand, I have dined at the *villino*, I——"

"Mother of heaven!" The Elder furiously clutched his arm. "You know her and you talk like this! You sit here calmly! You laugh! You lead me by the nose! You——"

Words failed him, and he could only work his fingers into the Younger's muscles. That gentleman tasted of his advantage.

"You see—in America they are all like that."

"And you are here to say so? Then you are either a monster or a liar."

"Also," continued the Younger placidly, "you must remember that I am a poor devil of an artist, while Susannah——"

"Ah, I will marry her yet!" cried the Elder with a new enthusiasm. "Take me! Take me!"

"To Susannah, you mean? For a thousand francs, I will. But wait till she comes out of the water."

II

IF Susannah and her mother were an American invention, the Younger began to take as much pleasure in them as if he had invented them himself. And indeed, in a way, he had. Hitherto his acquaintance with them had been less cordial, if anything, than his acquaintance with the Elder. If Susannah had maintained an armed truce, as it were, because they were both strangers in a strange land, he had cultivated Susannah merely as a type. There was a lack, all around, of personalities. But now that he had lightly thrown Susannah to the lions he experienced a more particular interest in her case. He promised himself from the reaction of his two types some such entertainment as one might expect from the encounter of an irresistible force with an immovable obstacle.

Our party was not long re-established in Florence before the Elder repaired one day to the Younger's studio.

"It is all arranged," he announced importantly. "I am going to marry her."

The Younger, it must be confessed, was a little surprised that Susannah should have fallen so soon. But he kept his guard.

"My dear marquis, let me congratulate you! Have you set the day?"

"Oh, the details have yet to be arranged. But I have spoken to her mother."

A light began to break upon the Younger.

"And the General is favorable?"

"The General is favorable—most favorable. She could not be favorable enough."

It must be explained that Susannah's parent, in virtue of a striking resemblance to the Father of her Country, and of certain soldierly qualities which she displayed, was known among her fellow-colonists as the General.

"I hope Susannah was equally favorable," the Younger lightly threw out.

"She was not there. But after the mother has given her assurance——"

The Younger began incontinently to laugh. "My poor marquis! Didn't you know?"

"Know what?" demanded that nobleman uneasily.

"That the mother has nothing to do with it?"

"How has she nothing to do with it? She has everything to do with it. Isn't Susannah her daughter?"

"I have no reason to suspect the contrary. But in our country—you know——"

"Well, what about this extraordinary country of yours?"

"Why, in our country"—the Younger put it as gently as he could—"we don't ask the mother."

"What in the world do you do then? Is it like the rape of the Sabines, *par exemple*? Do you ride in and carry them off?"

"Oh, not a bit! Sometimes they ride in and carry us off. But we—we don't dare. We go in very softly and ask them if they'll come."

"Without waking the mother up? I see! It's another invention." The Elder was visibly annoyed.

"Come!" cried the Younger; "you needn't be so fierce. I didn't invent it. You had better be congratulating yourself that the General didn't gobble you up on the spot—for herself."

The marquis looked very blank.

"Then I have done nothing?" he asked at last.

"*Caro marchese*," began the Younger soothingly, "to have gained a friend is always to have done something. It is very well to have the General on your side. It will make her all the more amenable when you come to the matter of settlements. For I must warn you before it is too late that——"

"What?" The Elder braced himself as for another blow.

"That we don't make settlements."

It was as if suddenly the Elder had seen a mountain slide into the sea.

"What the devil do you make then?"

"We," replied the Younger with a particular inflection, "make love!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the Elder.

And he turned on his heel.

III

HE let several suns go down on a certain stiffness which he felt toward his young adviser. But that it was no more than a stiffness was proven by his eventual reappearance. The Younger in the meantime was more or less in the dark as to the progress of events. He knew that there was no break as yet; but his previous acquaintance with Susannah and the General had not been such as to entitle him to their confidences. He was accordingly much pleased when the Elder came back.

"This time I am ready for you," observed that worthy; "and I might add that she is ready for me."

The Younger's intentions had been of the best; but if you make a pass at a fencer his wrist will spring instinctively into play.

"Which one?" he inquired, with a smile.

"Do you ask?" retorted the Elder.

"I stand corrected. Of course, you will have to take them both. Have they given their word?"

"Ah—do you mean that the old one will be hard to shake off?" put the Elder, with something less of assurance.

"Not at all. I mean that neither of them can be shaken off. It is a particularity of the case. It is like the Siamese twins. Whoever takes one, takes both. It is the one case of plural marriage tolerated in my country."

"In that case," rejoined the Elder unperturbed, "there will be no trouble about the settlements."

The Younger took his pink with a laugh. "Then you have been making the other thing. Have you asked her yet?"

"No. But it comes to the same. I have sounded her."

"Oh! And she rang true? How did you manage it?"

The Elder took his step without a

tremor. "I offered her a present and she accepted it."

The Younger left him an instant in his security. "Yes? What was it?"

"An antique pendant. It is now hanging against her heart."

The Younger took this picture in, but he repressed a laugh. "My dear marquis, you might give her seventy-three pendants, and I presume she would wear as many of them against her heart as she could. But it would prove nothing."

The Elder looked reproach before he offered it. "You assure me she is respectable. How can she receive presents from a man, how can her mother allow her to receive presents, unless she means something?"

"Perfectly well," laughed the Younger irritatingly.

"And is that another, may I ask, of your famous inventions?" put the Elder, with some irony.

"It is perhaps the most famous of all," replied the Younger, without a quail. "We are a philosophic people. We take what comes, whether it be bankruptcy or diamonds."

"Yes, but young girls!" burst out the Elder. "Can they take diamonds and keep their characters?"

"Perfectly well! What have diamonds to do with character? The young girls do not attach the exaggerated importance to material things which you do here. They receive necklaces, stomachers, tiaras as the merest natural tribute to their charms, and as simply as they would receive wild-flowers. It means nothing."

The Elder gasped. "And would they be capable of refusing one after that?"

"Perfectly."

"*Madre di Dio!* What a society! What taste! What—" He could say no more. But even in the rapids he felt that the Younger was the only one to pilot him ashore. "Do you positively mean to tell me, then, that I am nowhere?"

The Younger relented a little. "Of course I cannot read the secrets of Susannah's heart. For all I know you

may be enthroned upon its topmost pinnacle. I only tell you that the pendant, by itself, means nothing."

The Elder looked lost. "Do I accomplish nothing, then, by what I have done?"

"Only," answered the Younger briskly, "by following it up. A pendant is very well, but it is not enough. You see, in America anybody might give her a pendant—the butcher, the postman, the undertaker. You must do more. You must offer solid proofs of your state of heart. You must find out what Susannah wants. If it is something which can be made to order, into which you can put something of yourself, all the better. Then she will know that you are in earnest, and will act accordingly."

The Elder took it seriously—not in a pique, but as under the enlarging influence of new ideas.

"I have heard her speak of something," he said slowly, interrogatively.

"What was it?"

"Do you remember those door knockers at Palazzo Testadura? Bronze? By Benvenuto Cellini?"

"The Neptune, you mean?"

"Yes. She said she wished they had them at the *villino*. They have nothing but an iron finger or something, you know. I could have them copied—by way of a beginning."

"Yes!" cried the Younger in a final burst of inspiration. "And to give the personal note, to suggest delicately the idea of your knocking at her door, you could have the Neptune's head modeled after your own!"

IV

THUS it was that the fecundating word was spoken. To stop its effect was now beyond the power of man. Thenceforward it remained for the Younger only to stand by and admire his handiwork. He was like a chemist who performs an experiment for the first time.

Events were by no means slow in materializing. The Elder quickly re-

ported on the knockers. Melconi, the sculptor, had taken a cast and was to remodel the head in accordance with the Younger's suggestion. The prospective donor was already engaged upon a sequence of sonnets—in the manner of Petrarch, he said—to accompany the gift. In the meantime he had ascertained that Susannah would not draw a tranquil breath until she possessed a certain heraldic shield, an old stone coat-of-arms which hung high above the street on the corner of a house across the Arno. He had accordingly entered into negotiation with the owner of the house, had acquired for a fabulous sum the shield in question and had borne it in triumph to the panting Susannah.

This was but the beginning. The Younger no longer needed to offer suggestions. The Elder's own imagination was fertilized, and now that he knew how ladies were wooed in America he purposed to win Susannah. That young woman expressed no fleeting fancy which her admirer did not at once embody for her in some form of art. She could not look with favor on the moon, but that the marquis would run to order of his jeweler a replica of that heavenly orb, in material far more precious than the original. He could think only in terms of the idea which the Younger had implanted in his mind. The door of the *villino* swung unceasingly to messengers from the goldsmith, the dealer in antiques, the florist, the pastry cook. Even the upholsterer went, and to all was displayed an equal hospitality.

At this the Younger began to feel a secret irritation. He was amused. He was gratified to find his types turn out so typical. But it seemed to him they overdid it. He had not really supposed that Susannah was so bad as that. It verged on the scandalous. Unless—but it could mean only one thing.

Matters, however, proved not to be so simple, after all. There came a day when the Elder entered the studio in a state of mind more perturbed than any he had yet betrayed.

"She has refused me," he called out. "What do you think of that?"

The Younger did not know what to think of it. While, on the one hand, he could not restrain a certain gratification at Susannah's discernment, he deprecated, on the other, her amazing course with regard to the presents. But the Elder left him no time to muse.

"And what do you suppose she said?" he continued excitedly. "She said she wasn't sure how much I really cared for her. How much! She holds out her hand for everything I bring and then she agreeably withdraws it when she sees nothing more. After I have made myself the talk of the town!"

"Well, you know what I told you," remarked the Younger, who was much at sea. "Did you expect to bribe her?"

"Yes, I know what you told me. And I know what to think of such people."

The Younger shrugged his shoulders. "If that is the way you take it, I begin to think Susannah is right."

The Elder threw him a look.

"But what does she want?" he cried, clasping his hands dramatically in the air. "What does she want that I can't give her? What is she now, compared to what she would be as my wife?"

The Younger examined his fingernails. "You have already had some opportunity to learn that an American girl is the most unbridled creature in the universe. She may think it more amusing to stay so than to become an Italian marchioness."

"I thought you said they were respectable—your famous *jeunes filles*," exclaimed the Elder sarcastically.

The Younger smiled. "I'm afraid that's harder on the marchionesses than it is on the *jeunes filles*."

The Elder shrugged his shoulders.

"But what is she now, and what would she become? She is nobody, whereas my wife—" A handsome gesture left the Younger to figure that personage. "And she evidently finds the attractions of this country superior to the rather problematical ones—excuse me!—of her own. She says every day she is going, but she never goes."

"Well, she is at least free to go. And you must remember that America is gilded with the associations of an anarchistic youth. There is but an open door between her and an iridescent dream. When Europe has no more to offer her champing spirit she has but to step back into that happy hunting-ground of the *jeune fille*. Whereas with you—the door would close behind her."

The Elder put this from him with a twist of head and hand. "Excuse me, *caro mio*, if I seem to allude to personal matters. But you will remember that at Viareggio, that first time, you attributed something of your own coolness to—the fact——"

"Of being a pauper?" filled out the Younger cheerfully. "Yes."

"Well, if I must say it, she could do much worse than to marry me. Doesn't she know?"

"That is true," admitted the Younger, studying his nails anew. From another these facts somehow came with less grace. He was on the edge of declaring that Susannah would not think twice about money when a sudden vanity withheld him. So he contented himself with adding: "But she could also do much better."

"How?" interrogated the Elder, turning savagely upon him. "What more, I ask you, can a respectable girl want? In God's name, what more?"

The Younger knew now that he approved enough of Susannah's discernment to suspend judgment upon her bad taste. And he answered softly:

"I hardly know—unless one thing. And that she has already. So why should she want it?"

"What?" demanded the Elder. "I will give her whatever she wants. What is it?"

The Younger looked out of the window.

"Youth," he replied.

There was a silence. There was such a silence that the Younger knew he had been a fool. He turned around with the intention of smoothing things over a bit, and the look which he caught on the Elder's face deepened his pang.

But the marquis, giving him no time, passed it off.

"Eh, my young friend, you have hit it on the head. But never mind. I have not made myself the talk of the town for nothing. And Miss Susannah shall find it out. I will go on as I have begun. I will pay her such attention, I will give her such presents, that even she—even she—will find that she is compromised. Then I will tell you whom she will marry."

And with this delicate intimation he went away.

V

THIS was how it came to the Younger that more might lie in experiments than one foresaw. He did not like at all that insinuation that the marquis would catch Susannah by foul means if not by fair. But, however he might dislike the Elder's tactics, the Younger felt his own share of the responsibility, and toward the Elder himself he felt particularly contrite.

It was chiefly at the house of Susannah that the two men continued to meet. But with regard to this party to the episode as well, the sentiments of the Younger underwent a change. Susannah became for him a distracting problem. He was hugely amused at the way in which she played her great fish. She refused to take the marquis seriously. She would delightfully debate the pros and cons of his suit as often as he brought them up. But while she always ended by refusing him, she never refused a present. The Younger could not make her out.

The two men met one morning at the gate of the *villino*—the Younger going in, the Elder coming out. They exchanged ceremonious salutations, as usual.

"I have just brought the knockers," said the latter. "I am much obliged for that clever suggestion of yours. The head is a speaking likeness."

The Younger smiled uncomfortably. "Yes? And what does our young lady think of them?"

"She is very pretty. She says they

are too charming to put out here on the door. She must keep them by her." The Elder paused, grinning unpleasantly. "The Neptune, you know——"

At the gesture he made, the Younger stepped inside and slammed the gate in his face. Could a spectator then have seen both sides of the wall he would have observed each gentleman, very red, contemplating for a moment the closed door. He would finally have seen them turn and walk away—the Elder slowly, shrugging his shoulders; the Younger in haste, his head held high.

For the Younger the scale had fallen definitely to the side of Susannah. He might have had his contrition for the marquis; but that was nothing to his contrition for the girl. The marquis could take care of himself. The Younger would not stand by and see his people undone in the person of Susannah.

He found her in the *sala*, laughing over the obnoxious knockers. The sight of it angered him the more.

"My deaf young lady," he cried out, "you have made a fool of yourself long enough. You must go home."

Susannah stopped laughing, for very surprise. She examined the flushed Younger curiously, as if he had been a strange beast in a cage.

"Well," she said, "what is the matter with you? Do you feel ill? Shall I ring for Gilda?"

The Younger flung his hat into a chair. "I do feel ill! You and the marquis make me ill between you!"

"Oh, the marquis!" Susannah glanced at the knockers and smiled. "Yes, I remember. You introduced the marquis to me; didn't you?"

"Yes," he said. "That's why I'm here now."

She laughed. "What funny creatures men are! They never think of things beforehand. And they said you were clever."

"I never told you so," he retorted rather dully. "You'd better wait till you get things from headquarters."

"So had you," she rapped out. "Who told you I was making a fool of myself?"

"Nobody! Nobody needed to! What under the sun do you mean by filling your house with his truck?"

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Susannah hotly. "You don't care anything about us!"

"What if I don't? I care about seeing my country made a scandal."

Susannah again looked at him curiously a moment.

"Oh, if you are so patriotic I wonder you don't go home yourself. Wouldn't that be the easiest way out of your—" she smiled—"your troubles?"

"No!" he snapped. "That wouldn't stop anything. I want things stopped. I want you to go."

"Well, well!" she exclaimed. "You *are* in a hurry all of a sudden. It seems to me that you ask a good deal of people you have done so little for; though perhaps you *have* done a good deal. Is that all?"

"No!" he cried. "Since you ask, I want you to send him back all these things—every one of them."

She looked at him more curiously still.

"What! All these pretty things! Why, we're only just beginning to get comfortable. And see! He just brought me something else."

She held up the knockers, as if they had been two dolls. The Younger shrugged his shoulders and walked to the end of the room.

"What are you going to do?" he suddenly threw at her. "Are you going to marry him?"

She laughed softly. "Him? Oh, no! no! And I don't even think he really wants me to. It's a sort of game, you see," she added, with a confiding seriousness.

"*Dio mio!* I do see. I have seen for a good while. How long are you going to keep it up?"

"I don't think you really deserve to know," she said, with her head on one side; "but since you ask, and since you began it, I will tell you." She assumed an air of great mystery. "I'm going to keep it up till he brings me the gold salt spoons!"

He stared at her. But she faced him

out, and when he walked away to a window she threw him a question in turn.

"Now that I've told you what you wanted to know, will you tell me something?"

"What is it?" He faced partly about.

"Just how did the game begin? What did you tell him, I mean? You see, his—his manners—were so different before you came and after."

The Younger laughed curtly. "I told him you were respectable."

At this he looked out of the window again.

"Oh—respectable," said Susannah behind him. "You told him I was respectable? That was very kind of you—I'm sure." And then the *ewig Weibliche* came out with a sob. "You horrid man! You perfectly horrid man! You're just——"

She flounced out of the room.

VI

THE Elder stood at the gate of the *villino*. It was a post familiar enough to him, and the particular object upon which his eyes rested was scarcely less so. But the juxtaposition was unusual. For the panel before him was embellished by that replica of Benvenuto's knocker, to which reference has already so frequently been made. What manner of omen could it be? He studied the knocker; he studied the door; and finally it occurred to him to apply the one with some vehemence to the other.

In response to this overture a flip-flap of slippers clattered across the flagging within, and the door was opened by Gilda in person. Again the Elder wondered. For hitherto the door, obeying some secret impulse, had betrayed no hint of human agency. The maid, however, left him no time to parley:

"Oh, *Signor Marchese!* The ladies have gone to America. Did he forget?"

"*Diavolo!*" ejaculated that personage.

"Yes, about a quarter of an hour

ago. They said they told him they were going, but in case he forgot and came again—the *Marchese* has made such a habit!—to let him know they were leaving by the Genoa train at eleven. There is still time."

The Elder looked at his watch.

"Is there still time?" he uttered slowly. He stared at the sea god who so splendidly brandished in his own image the trident before his eyes.

"If the *Marchese* hastens," replied the interested Gilda. "My *padrona*——"

But the Elder quenched her with a silver *lira* and strode away. Even after he had ordered a cabman to hurry him to the station, though, he did not really believe he would go in. Indeed, by the time he reached the station he was quite sure he would not go in. That would be too— Yet he jumped out of the carriage before it stopped, and ran through to the platform. He would just find out! And he almost ran into the arms of the Younger, who was strolling up and down with a cigarette.

"It is true, eh?" asked the Elder, collecting himself against this new surprise. For the moment it escaped him that he and the Younger were no longer on the best of terms.

"It looks like it," replied the other. "Shall I take you to the compartment?"

The Elder did not answer; but he followed his companion, and presently, in all truth, he beheld Susannah and the General enthroned amid mountains of luggage.

"Why, we began to think you weren't coming!" cried Susannah, smiling out of the window. "That would have been a nice way to treat us!"

The Elder made an extravagant bow. "If you give no hint——"

Susannah laughed. "No one ever got so many hints. We have told you every day. We told you yesterday."

The Elder passed it off with a shrug. "How soon may we expect you back?"

Susannah shook her finger out of the window. "Never! I think Europe is perfectly horrid!"

"Oh!" The marquis laughed. "And how about America?"

"Dear me!" cried Susannah. "There's no comparison!"

"So I have understood!" exclaimed the Elder gaily, glancing at the Younger.

"I don't think you understand well enough, though," objected Susannah. "You don't seem to understand that, after all, people make more difference than pictures and palaces. And the people there are different. It isn't just that they don't act like monkeys the first time they see you on the beach. It isn't that they aren't taken in so easily, and that they don't make such fools of themselves. They are nicer. They are better. They have some honor and some self-respect."

She quite lost her climaxes in her haste to get it out, and in her smile there was something very pointed. As for the marquis, he again made a profound bow.

"They are very superior beings, I am sure. But you seem to have been some time in coming to this conclusion."

Susannah's head dropped a little to one side.

"Not so long as you might think," she said. "I reached it at Viareggio last summer."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the marquis. "And may one ask how, with such a weight upon your mind, you succeeded in deferring your departure so long?"

"Why, yes! And what is more, I will tell you. I was waiting to furnish the *villino*. It wasn't quite complete, you know, until the other day. Did I tell you," she asked, turning to the Younger, "that the marquis had given me the loveliest little gold salt spoons?"

"Your furniture will be much admired in your American home," remarked the Elder pleasantly.

"Oh, dear, no!" cried Susannah. "I

wouldn't have anything in my American home to remind me of Europe. We have left the *villino*, just as it stands, to the new tenant."

"Ah! You must have got something very handsome for so completely equipped an establishment—even to gold salt spoons," exclaimed the Elder, with an amiable smile.

"Perhaps I might have," replied Susannah, "but the new tenant could scarcely have afforded that."

"And may I ask who the happy man may be?" inquired the Elder, with perhaps a shade of interest.

"Oh, it isn't a man at all," said Susannah. "It's our maid, you know—Gilda. She has been so good—the one good person in Europe, I believe. We bought the house for her, and took the trouble to have a complete inventory put in the deed—even to the door-knockers—so that there might be no misunderstanding about it."

Whatever the Elder might have had for that was spoiled by the guard, who hurried toward them locking the compartment doors. Turning to the Younger the Elder took his arm.

"Well," he said, "it seems to me that we are forsaken!"

He was admirable. He had never been so admirable. The Younger, however, gently disengaged himself.

"Pardon me. I am sorry to seem rude, but—I am going, too."

And he made for the door before the guard should lock it.

"*Par-ten-za!*" shouted that functionary, with energy.

The two young people stood together at the window, looking down at the Elder. For an instant the Younger's heart smote him. But something from the eyes nearer his own hardened him again to the cruelty of youth.

"Oh, by the way," he called, as the train jolted into motion; "don't forget! You owe me, you know, a thousand francs!"

A SCIENTIST with a pound of radium cannot do half such wonderful things as a scandalmonger can with a grain of truth.

A SIGN OF THE SPRING

(WITH FREDERICK LOCKER IN MIND)

MY sweetheart knows it's spring,
 Not because the robins sing,
 Nor the gnats;
 She knows it not by song,
 Nor because the days grow long,
 But by hats.

There's a new one every year;
 Some are dearer, all are dear,
 Each a prize.
 Have they not, then, any faults?
 Ah! investigation halts
 At her eyes!

WARWICK JAMES PRICE.



STILL EARLY

MARY—Has Jane made up her mind to marry that rich Mr. Porkington?
 ANN—No. In fact, I don't believe she has made up *his* mind yet.



THE ONLY EXPLANATION

"I AM told that Miss Dingbatts is to marry Cholly Noodles," remarked Thornton.
 "Election bet?" asked Spatts.



NO CHANGE

YALETON, JR.—Hello, dad! Thought I'd take a run up into the country for a little change.

YALETON, SR.—Too late, my son. Your mother thought she'd take a run into the city, and she's taken it all with her.